DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 249 952 IR 011 396

AUTHOR Wolcott, Harry F.
TITLE Research on the Introduction, Use, and Impact of the "ThinkAbout" Instructional Television Series. Volume IV. A View of Viewers: Observations on the Response to and Classroom Use of "ThinkAbout."
INSTITUTION Agency for Instructional Television, Bloomington, Ind.
SPONS AGENCY Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Washington, D.C.; EXXON Education Foundation, New York, N.Y.
PUB DATE Jan 82
NOTE 123p.; For related documents, see IR 011 390-398.
AVAILABLE FROM Agency for Instructional Technology, Box A, Bloomington, IN 47402 ($6.00 per copy).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Case Studies; *Educational Television; Elementary Education; Field Tests; Intermediate Grades; Language Arts; Mathematics Instruction; *Problem Solving; Study Skills; *Teacher Attitudes; Television Research; *Television Viewing; *Use Studies
IDENTIFIERS *ThinkAbout

ABSTRACT

This report summarizes two case studies conducted in 1979-1980 in a combined fifth-sixth grade special class for talented and gifted pupils in a large Oregon school district and a sixth grade self-contained classroom in a small school district, both of which were using ThinkAbout, a series of 60 15-minute instructional television programs designed to strengthen the reasoning skills of fifth and sixth graders, and to review and reinforce language arts, mathematics, and study skills. Four questions are used as a focus for summarizing observations and reflections on teacher attitudes toward using instructional television and the effects of instructional television on children: (1) If ThinkAbout is primarily a series on problem solving, whose problems does it solve? (2) What kind of teachers use a program like ThinkAbout? (3) What are some of the old and new important lessons to be learned as a result of ThinkAbout's first year? and (4) What are some broader issues related to instructional television that have been suggested by the field study? Findings discussed indicate that some teachers seem categorically opposed to using instructional television; users range from very causal viewers to committed proponents; and reasons for using television include many factors in addition to purely instructional ones. (LMM)

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Volume IV

A View of Viewers: Observations on the Response to and Classroom Use of ThinkAbout, a Program Produced by the Agency for Instructional Television

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Professor of Education and Anthropology
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agency for instructional television

RESEARCH ON THE INTRODUCTION, USE, AND IMPACT

OF THE THINKABOUT INSTRUCTIONAL TELEVISION SERIES

Principal Investigators:

James R. Sanders and Subhash R. Sonnad

Evaluation Center

Western Michigan University

Volume IV

A VIEW OF VIEWERS:

OBSERVATIONS ON THE RESPONSE TO AND CLASSROOM USE OF THINKABOUT, A PROGRAM PRODUCED BY THE AGENCY FOR INSTRUCTIONAL TELEVISION

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Professor of Education and Anthropology

University of Oregon

January 1982

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This research was conducted for the Agency for Instructional Television, Box A, Bloomington, IN 47402. Financial support for the research was provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the Exxon Education Foundation, and the ThinkAbout consortium of state and provincial education agencies. Their support should not be construed as an endorsement of the research findings.

IR011396

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FOREWORD

Dr. Harry F. Wolcott is Professor of Education and Anthropology in the Division of Education Policy and Management at the University of Oregon. Dr. Wolcott conducted a number of interviews and observations in Lane County, Oregon, and completed two case studies during the period from October 1979 to June 1980. The case studies were conducted in a combined fifth-sixth grade special class for talented and gifted pupils in a larger school district and a sixth grade self-contained classroom in a small school district. In addition to observations related to the use of ThinkAbout in each classroom, Dr. Wolcott posed a number of issues related to the use of instructional television more generally:

1. Some teachers seem categorically opposed to using instructional television.
2. Users range from very casual viewers to rather committed proponents, and the explanations given for using television include many factors in addition to purely instructional ones.
3. Poor reception and equipment appear to be convenient reasons for not viewing programs but seem to be ignored if teachers want to use them.
4. Regardless of the producers' intent, the teacher appears to be the one to interpret what the formal lesson is and the extent to which it will be pursued.
5. Measuring or documenting the effects of instructional television on children is problematic.
6. The status of media use among teachers does appear to be high.

J. R. S. and S. R. S.
January 1982

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INTRODUCTION

In September 1979 a number of public television stations began broadcasting a new television program called ThinkAbout, designed for in-class use and intended for fifth and sixth graders. The series, which had been in planning and preparation stages since 1973, was produced by the Agency for Instructional Television and was, in turn, available to the 38 consortium member state and provincial education agencies in the United States and Canada that had sponsored the production.

The ThinkAbout series consists of 60 15-minute programs. In most areas two different programs were aired each week, and each program was shown more than once to make it easily available for classroom use. Teacher use of the series was optional, although great effort was made to publicize the series, to stress that it was intended as a regular part of a classroom program rather than as an enrichment or supplement, and to link it with critical issues in the instructional program. The program continued to carry the banner that the project had used since its inception: "Skills Essential to Learning." An early brochure describes its emphasis on thinking and problem solving:

> The series helps fifth and sixth graders acquire and use the skills they must have to become independent learners and problem-solvers--now, in their future schooling, and for the rest of their lives. These include language arts, mathematics, and study skills, with special emphasis on their common denominator, thinking.

The scale on which ThinkAbout had been produced was not modest, and its producers (and eager supporters among consortium members) were not modest about it. They boasted of the years of effort, the involvement of hundreds of educators, the millions of dollars invested ($3 million from consortium members, $1.4 million from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, another $200,000 from Exxon to assist with initial information activities). An early description called the project "the most ambitious instructional television series developed for national use" and referred to it as "a shining example of meticulous planning, design and execution."

Coupled with enthusiastic promotional efforts to bring the new program to the attention of its intended audience of fifth and sixth grade classrooms and teachers, the Agency for Instructional Television (AIT) also saw an opportunity for learning about instructional television in general through a careful monitoring of the first-year experience with ThinkAbout. I am skeptical that the motives here were entirely "pure," for I assume that it is encumbent on the Agency to be able to undergird its solicitations for future projects with some evidence of the achievements of its previous ones. I imagine that AIT wants--and needs--to be able to show that it is doing a good job.

On the other hand, AIT is a large and well established organization with a solid reputation. It appears to be quite willing to take an analytical view of itself and of the instructional consequences of the

form of media to which it is so wholeheartedly committed. AIT not only has its own research staff but contracts independently with outside agencies. For an independent assessment of the effects of the first year of ThinkAbout, the Agency contracted with the Evaluation Center at Western Michigan University, although the Agency was in fact neither preoccupied with "assessment" nor with "evaluation." What the Agency did want was an inquiry that would tell them something about what went on in classrooms where ThinkAbout was used during its first year. Three different sources of information were identified for addressing the broad question of what happens when a new program is introduced. Augmenting more traditional approaches involving before-and-after testing and mailed questionnaires was the proposal to have experienced observers provide case study data from a limited number of closely observed settings. And that is where I came in.

Since there was no compelling reason to choose one area rather than another for conducting the case studies--other than the obvious facts that some attention had to be given to where the programs were actually going to be broadcast and that there was opportunity for conducting research in more than one region of North America--the Evaluation Center directed its attention to the individuals who might be called on to conduct the case studies. When I expressed interest in the possibilities of conducting such research in Oregon, then Oregon became a possible site for case study research. When the scope of the project became clearer to me and I proposed sharing the task with another researcher who lived in the Portland area some 110 miles from the university community of Eugene-Springfield where I live, then Portland became another of the case study areas. Our efforts on the

west coast were complemented by a third observer who was able to devote substantial time (far more than either of us) to similar studies in the greater St. Louis area. Under different circumstances the case studies might have been carried out instead in Alaska and Ohio, Alberta and South Carolina, or any other combination of sites.

My motives for joining the project were several. Time compatibility ranked high; I could conduct the field research on my own schedule during the school year and was able to set aside ample time for writing up the material at the end of my own school year when I had completed my teaching responsibilities. I was engaged in no major research or writing project, and this research promised the very opportunity to get back into classrooms that I had been seeking. If I had not accepted the invitation to join the project, then I imagined (rightly, I think) that Oregon would probably not be selected as a case study state. I thought my efforts might serve some useful purpose among educators in my state who make decisions about instructional television, though my impression at this point is that commitments to television are already long-standing and my observations are not going to sway anyone.

No one ever solicited my personal opinion about educational television (I think I would say I'm "lukewarm at the most"). I do not think my personal thoughts about classroom television ever got in the way of my research but I do want them "up front" so the reader knows where I stand. I will get to this issue in the body of the report.

I was pleased to find that the series was of high quality but was nonetheless dismayed when anyone assumed that I was in any way linked to its production or to an interest in instructional television. That

seemed particularly vexsome whenever I realized that my efforts to get kids to talk naturally about the program invariably aroused their suspicion that I had somehow produced it. Little did they know that I would have been just as happy to see them with their heads "buried in their books."

Professionally the project provided a challenge for me to draw upon my resources as ethnographer and yet to work toward far more modest objectives by providing some useful descriptive data rather than attempting to address all the cultural underpinnings of the American educational system. I was particularly attracted to the idea of attending to what we can learn from an effort like ThinkAbout rather than feeling that we must judge it. What I hope I have succeeded in doing here is to lay bare some evaluative issues that seem to me to be so prominent in all facets of the educational establishment. I have not tried to sidestep them but rather to consider how they, too, form part of the context in which we work as educators.

If I had any disappointment--and this is not a crushing one--it is that I think I did not witness what the producers continue to describe as "skills essential to learning." In the last few years I have increasingly turned my attention to what we mean when we talk about learning, to what we know and what we might know about it, and to why teachers do not consider themselves to be "students" of the learning process. Psychologists have somehow managed to make learning a dull subject and to draw our attention away from the incredible processes of human learning in natural settings to the contrived learning of inconsequentials. In my work in the anthropology of education I am combing the anthropological literature to see how it might be employed

to rekindle some spark of interest to get educators more intrigued with learning processes, and I am trying to encourage my colleagues to do likewise.

This project promised "skills essential to learning," but that is not what I had occasion to observe. I did not really think I would be observing "learning," but I thought that my experience of this year would help me get a bit closer to understanding all that is implicated by that term. Rather than observe "skills essential to learning" in the introduction of the ThinkAbout series, what I think I have examined instead might better be called "activities essential to teaching."

The report that follows deals with teachers and teaching. And that, I have come to believe, is what ThinkAbout is about. Technical definitions notwithstanding, in terms of human communications, and whether inside classrooms or out, television sets are transmitters, not receivers. They are more like teachers and not at all like students. When our own gaze is on classroom television, our efforts cannot help but be directed to the concerns of teaching far more than to matters of learning.

As an anthropologically oriented observer, I am committed (hopelessly but willingly) to context. The organization of this report reflects that commitment. I did conduct the "one or more" case studies as originally proposed; two case studies are included here as Part II of this report. But I felt an urgency about talking to a number of teachers and other educators about ThinkAbout in particular and instructional television in general, and a year's accumulation of conversations, observations, and ruminations have given me the sense

of "context" that I was seeking. Part I of this report represents my attempt to portray this context and to find some ways to sort out people and issues in terms that may prove useful to those who need a sense of where we are and what might be done next. If at times my categories or interpretations seem rather "obvious," I must note that in talking about classrooms or television we are, in fact, dealing with rather "everyday" stuff; that only makes the task of sorting the more challenging.

PART I: OVERVIEW AND REFLECTIONS

GUIDING QUESTIONS

If pressed for a succinct but considered opinion based upon my year's observations and reflections with this new instructional television series I would say:

ThinkAbout Is a Well-Produced Series, but Who Needs It?

There is no doubt concerning the high quality of the series. Word of the quality of the programs has spread; I found several instances where people assured me that this is one of the best series ever produced and only later revealed that they themselves had never seen a program. Even the suggestions that people made or criticisms offered are implicit praise. Although it may not be apparent from the comments and suggestions I will report here, for almost any suggestion or criticism of something that might be changed or improved, some other viewer lauded the same element as a high point.

My statement, "But who needs it?" is posed as a question, not as a judgment, though it nicely accommodates that hard-to-ignore sector (a majority?) of educators who express little or no interest in educational television. The question became an orienting one in my research and in the end has proven far too big for me to address. I propose it as a useful question in future research on instructional television. What it does is to invite our attention to the kinds of teachers or classroom settings that actually use instructional television or use particular kinds of programs. I was inclined during the year to think about the "profile" of teacher-users, and that inclination was nurtured by the ready stereotypes that non-

user-teachers have of their colleagues who use television, but I realize now that teacher profiles are not what we seek. Instead, I think we need to identify as best we can what it is that teacher-users are trying to accomplish when they switch the classroom television set "on." Whatever their motives, that is the ready audience for producers like AIT.

My observations in this section and in the case studies that follow may help direct attention to what it is that teachers "mean" when they use television, but the questions I address here are more modest. In this section, I have attempted to summarize my observations and reflections around four questions:

Question One: If ThinkAbout is primarily a series on problem solving, whose problems does it solve?

Question Two: What kinds of teachers use a program like ThinkAbout?

Question Three: What are some of the important lessons (both old and new) to be learned as a result of ThinkAbout's first year?

Question Four: What are some broader issues related to instructional television that have been suggested by this field study of ThinkAbout?

Unlike the two focussed case studies reported in Part II, in addressing these four questions I range freely over my observations and interviews for the past 10 months. I took every opportunity to talk with users as well as nonusers of instructional television, with viewers and non-viewers of ThinkAbout, with educators who knew a great deal about the series, who had never heard of it, or who might have been expected to know about ThinkAbout but did not (for example, fifth and sixth grade teachers in Oregon, or an elementary school principal in Calgary, Alberta, who insisted they had never

heard about it). My intent during the research was to tap the widest possible range of views about the program and about ITV; my intent now is to convey that broad perspective.

QUESTION ONE: IF THINKABOUT IS PRIMARILY A SERIES ON PROBLEM SOLVING, WHOSE PROBLEMS DOES IT SOLVE?

Like everything else that goes on in school, ThinkAbout is intended to bring about changes (which is to say, improvements) in the learner. That ideal objective was reiterated at every level.

From an announcement from the producers:

> Programs in the "Thinkabout" series focus on problems children face, in and out of school. . . . The idea is to get students to see how "school" skills like language arts and mathematics can be used to solve their own problems, and to apply the skills themselves.

From a memo written to the case study team from Evaluation Center staff describing the purposes of the program:

> The intent of the designers is that use of the Think-About series will produce 5th and 6th graders who are more planful in attacking any problem than they would be if they had not been exposed to the series. Think-About is to teach them
>
> --to figure out a plan of attack;
> --to use the library, people, or other resources;
> --to set goals and priorities;
> --to conceive of unusual ways of communication; and
> --to choose among alternatives.

From an interview at the state department of education:

> ThinkAbout is definitely supposed to be one of the regular classroom activities, not a supplement. Teachers have enough to do right now without adding an extra hour-and-a-half of teaching to their load each week. So, unlike some other programs, this is just part of the regular teaching.

From a handout distributed by the county educational office:

> ThinkAbout is designed to help strengthen and develop reasoning and study skills and to help improve and extend mathematics and communication skills.

From the preliminary teacher's guide:

> "ThinkAbout" is a series of sixty fifteen-minute programs that help fifth and sixth graders acquire and use the skills they must have to be independent learners and problem-solvers.

My observations lead me to believe that from the classroom teacher's perspective, instructional television is used when it solves a problem (or problems) of the teacher. A series devoted to problem solving must also solve teacher problems. Of course, the teaching of problem solving might itself be a teacher problem, but I think there are numerous reasons that lead teachers to television other than curricular content. These might be called programmatic reasons.

A. Programmatic Reasons for Using Any Instructional Television in Class—and Especially a New Series

1. Relief or respite. As one teacher noted, "ThinkAbout provided 15 minutes twice a week that I didn't have to plan or teach."

2. Variety; enjoyment. Teacher comments related to ThinkAbout included:

   "Not everything we do in class has to be instructive."

   "This isn't hurting them; maybe it gives some of them something to think about."

3. Doing something new; keeping up; drawing attention to oneself as an "innovative" teacher.

A teacher brought this point home by stating, "I'll keep using this program if it lets a little light shine on me. If not, I'll go back to teaching those skills by which we teachers are being judged through pupil performance on tests." My feeling is that positive recognition played an important part in leading teachers to try ThinkAbout and in sustaining their interest. We field researchers

provided that attention for some teachers; the national survey conducted by the Evaluation Center provided it for others; administrators and media specialists for still others. (My hunch is that the attrition I noticed was quite independent of the pupils' response to the program but was related instead to the absence of collegial support.)

B. Curricular Rationale for Using Instructional Television

Whether or not their instructional decisions are prompted by curricular concerns, teachers have little difficulty supplying rationales for their decisions, and with judicious phrasing, the programmatic reasons just reviewed can be given curricular implications. I was interested in the range of topics teachers mentioned in explaining why they were using ThinkAbout. Here are five different sets of reasons teachers offered as their central reasons for using ThinkAbout:

1. For math and reasoning. (This teacher was having to show the program during her regular period for math instruction and she was not sure whether the promise of math-related topics suggested in early programs would continue.)

2. Social problem solving and an opportunity for class members to engage in discussion related to the stories and to their own lives.

3. Communication skills.

4. Guidance and counseling. (This "emerging" focus was identified in a follow-up interview by the same fifth grade teacher who had originally suggested communication skills. As the year continued, her own sense of the problem shifted, and apparently she redefined

ThinkAbout to suit. In prior years there had been a school counselor in her building; teachers were now having to do their own counseling.)

5. Problem solving.

Even the "problem-solving" focus of ThinkAbout was subject to a variety of interpretations; I found at least four distinguishable ones:

a. Problem solving in a general sense of "clear thinking." As a fifth grade teacher explained, "I told the kids at the beginning that one of my goals for the year was to teach them how to think, and this program is really good for them. I like it; it supports my goals."

b. Problem solving in the sense of arithmetic "word problems." A campaign was being mounted in one local school system for improving pupil skills in this area. Plans were being made during ThinkAbout's first year. The "math people" said they had not heard about ThinkAbout and expressed interest in it as a possible resource in their forthcoming campaign.

c. Problem solving as a self-conscious process. In one teacher's class I visited, a special class for gifted pupils, "creative problem solving" was a central focus of the class for several weeks. (This is one of the case study classrooms described in detail in Part II.)

d. Problem solving as core curriculum. In another school district a whole curriculum for a part-time (one-afternoon-a-week) program for gifted kids in grades 1 through 7 is being developed around three facets: socialization, thinking skills ("higher-level" problem solving and creativity), and productivity (independent study). At the time, only one teacher in the program was using ThinkAbout

(from videotapes, and without a teacher's guide), but it was assumed that more teachers would be using it as the gifted program itself became better defined.

C. The Teacher as Translator/Interpreter

The most interesting element in this year's observations has been the realization that regardless of whether the teacher uses media or not, the teacher--at least in fourth, fifth, and sixth grade suburban classrooms like the ones I visited--is the gatekeeper and interpreter who decides both what is to constitute a classroom "lesson" and the manner and extent to which any particular lesson will be pursued. Filmstrips, films, television, and the like compete with the teacher for classroom time, but it is ultimately the teacher who decides whether or not there will be a "lesson" and what that lesson will be. I use "lesson" here in its formal, "schooly" sense--something that someone in the formal role of teacher wants someone else in the formal role of student to learn. I certainly do not mean that one cannot learn from television unless a teacher is present; nor do I mean that the lessons a teacher identifies are necessarily the lessons learned, or that teachers have that much control over what is learned at school. But the teacher normally makes "lesson decisions" all day long, decisions revealed mostly through verbal directions or exchanges but, in any classroom that has had time to establish some routines, by other means as well--glances, fingers pointed or snapped, an audible clearing of the throat, additional instructions written on a chalkboard, and so on. Observers are first aware of only the more dramatic decisions, such as when attention is turned to a new topic; one becomes aware of more subtle decisions only later.

ThinkAbout provided a 15-minute respite (12½ minutes of program by my count, but we usually watched the full lead-in, and eventually the kids in one class started humming along with the ThinkAbout tune) but it also presented most teachers I observed with a "moment of truth" when they had to step in and make the move--or at least start the filtering process leading to it--that would eventually determine what the lesson would be.

My next "finding" is based on too few cases to be conclusive, but I think the point warrants careful observer attention: the "lesson" that the teacher makes will bring the topic back to teacher and classroom concerns. That statement may not be earth-shattering, but it is absolutely essential in understanding what happens to ThinkAbout in the classroom. If a problem is identified it will be a problem targeted by the teacher, reshaped by the teacher, or tacitly approved by the teacher in allowing pupils to seemingly "make their own way" in a discussion. In my observations, that problem was always defined or redefined in terms of a classroom concern of the teacher.

One further and important distinction: the "lessons" launched by the teacher are more like balloons or paper gliders or rafts than like intercontinental missiles or bullets. They are subject to drift as students batter them off-course, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Too many lessons may be launched at once, and no one survives the competition. Some are fragile; they disintegrate along the way. And often lessons are simply "set afloat" without sufficient aim or velocity; they sink rather quickly because neither pupils nor teachers are sufficiently committed to keep them floating.

It is important to note here that I am talking about "lessons" and the ideas or content contained in them. Teachers can remain fully in control of their classrooms and still fail to achieve their lessons. In the elementary classroom, teachers are ordinarily in control of the pupils, but no teacher is ever fully in control of the lessons. A new, unknown, and uncontrollable stimulus like ThinkAbout provided an unusual opportunity to observe the "lesson-making" or "lesson-defining" process at work.

Teachers approached the "moment of truth" (when the television would be turned off and lessons, if any, had to be identified) in a range of ways. At one extreme were teachers who simply "took it as it came," epitomized by a teacher who had no teacher's guide, selected programs by title from videotapes prerecorded at the school district central office, and reported, "I just watch it with the kids and punt from there." A regular user who had access to the guide said, "If I can use it, I use it; otherwise I let it go by." Because of incredible scheduling errors in broadcasting the programs in this state, the teachers who planned lessons based on the guide and the expected sequence were often caught unaware. Teachers who attempted no preliminary activities but simply watched the program with the pupils and "read along" in the guide were better able to take out-of-sequence programs in stride.

Other observers this past year describe the phenomenon I am discussing, though their interpretations vary slightly from the one I have proposed here. Sylvia Hart-Landsberg had opportunity to compare a student teacher and supervising teacher both working with the same classroom. Hart-Landsberg's interpretation is that both

teachers "sidestepped" the main message inherent in each ThinkAbout program; my interpretation is that the teachers "made" the message, but it happened not to be the one Hart-Landsberg herself would have made:

> Each teacher seems to have sidestepped the main problem-solving message of the show and come up with a lesson of her own. (Field report, April 15)

AIT staff member Kay Sloan reported a similar phenomenon. She was distracted by the fact that teachers where she visited did not have the teacher's guide; my notion is that regardless of whether the teachers have copies of the guide, their behavior will follow a similar pattern to what Sloan observed:

> These were very good teachers, the kind who quite naturally blend subject-matter areas and experiences in and out of school. Without orientation or guides they were using the program comfortably. They could not, without the Guide, identify the precise skills taught, but had no trouble teaching general reasoning and study skills, and tying them in with subject-matter skills. They noted liking the density and options of most of the programs. (AIT memorandum, March 28, 1980)

What follows is a suggestive list of ways that teachers may translate or interpret the potential message(s) following a ThinkAbout program:

1. Leave the message undeciphered/untranslated. Example: Program 12, "But What Does It Mean?" I watched the program with a fifth grade class. Prior to the program, the teacher had written four terms and a question on the board. But she did not discuss them after the broadcast. Immediately upon turning off the television she came over to me and whispered:

> I'm not going to do anything with it. Those questions were the ones I was supposed to work with. But they

> don't go anywhere. There's nothing here to work with. I hadn't seen this program. There's material here to discuss, but I'm not ready to talk about it with them, and the guide questions don't seem to work.

2. Interpret the message as out-of-bounds. Teacher boundaries (or what Jules Henry once called "cutoff points") range anywhere from issues too sensitive to issues too irrelevant. The teacher quoted above did not convey to the class the message she conveyed to me, that in part her reason for not discussing the program stemmed from a feeling that although there was content that one might have discussed, she was not prepared to deal with it in impromptu fashion. Program 13 ("The Bigger Picture") produced a similar response from another teacher. She felt that a program dealing with a runaway child and a one-parent home "touched too close to home for a lot of these kids." She recognized the issue as dealing with a problem of relevance to the children but not to her role relationship with them as pupils.

3. Interpret the central message as appropriate and relevant; reinforce and strengthen the signal. This is, of course, the "ideal" lesson: the message in the program is clear, the teacher accepts it as relevant and appropriate, and the subsequent "lesson" consists of emphasizing and extending the message. The first case study in Part II provides the illustration of a teacher who found ThinkAbout's messages consistent with her objectives for her class and who made easy work of emphasizing and extending them into the class's ongoing examination of problem solving.

4. Translate or reinterpret the message into another sphere.

a. Literal translation. Pupils were quite inclined to draw attention to the content of a program and away from an examination of

processes. Occasionally a teacher might do the same. Thus a sixth grade class honed in on cafeteria menu planning rather than on the broader issue of ways of finding out (Program 18, "What Should I Do?") when the teacher asked if class members would be interested in conducting "a menu survey of our own" just as the pupils had done in the television program.

b. Translate immediately into practice or application. Example: Immediately upon turning off the television the teacher tells the class to take out paper and write some physical fitness goals of their own.

c. Translate immediately into fun. Example: A teacher turns the follow-up discussion into opportunities for pupils to act out pantomimes, following one of the suggested activities in the teacher's guide but not making the connection between program and follow-up activity explicit.

d. Translate in terms of the relevance of the program to other curricular areas. This type of translation was seldom more than a fleeting reference to a previous program in an effort to join (classroom) problems or regular curricular activities with program content, of the sort: "You remember that program we watched last week when such-and-such happened? Well, today we are going to do some problems just like that." Teachers are forever making such connections for their pupils.

e. Translate the program content into an opportunity to carry out some new teacher-identified need or to return to some unfinished business. ThinkAbout invited discussion. Teachers sometimes seized opportunities to introduce old or recurring problems

in those discussions. And sometimes they would let a discussion continue in spite of considerable drift (e.g., when it was clear that the class was never going to get back to the lesson the teacher had initially set out to make) because other things were happening that were not anticipated but were nonetheless valued. This seemed especially the case when teachers felt that pupils who did not usually engage in discussions were becoming involved in time, or if, as reported later, teachers felt they were gaining some unexpected insight into the dynamics of their classroom or the thought processes of their more reticent pupils.

f. Translate the program into a moral lesson or underscore the moral lesson(s) already there.

g. Translate the program and/or lesson derived from it into an ongoing activity. The official benediction for a lesson--especially one that is terminated because of extraneous reasons like a bell schedule--often contains a general directive in which the teacher leaves the pupils with a challenge to use a new skill or concept in their out-of-school lives. I liked this example presented by a teacher as the class surged forward to recess: "So, look for patterns when you go home tonight. Where people sit, how they eat, and so forth. OK, you're excused."

QUESTION TWO: WHAT KINDS OF TEACHERS USE A PROGRAM LIKE THINKABOUT?

Just as I have insisted in the preceding discussion that it is the lesson that the teacher identifies that becomes the lesson made of ThinkAbout, so my observations lead me to believe that the matter of choice regarding whether or not television will be used in the classroom at all, what will be viewed, and for how long (e.g., for a program or two, a cluster or two, or an entire series) is almost entirely up to the teacher. With the exception of the World Series--the one time each year when pupils are sometimes able to cajole reluctant teachers into a brief spate of television watching--I think pupil interest is not ordinarily strong enough to override teacher disinterest. I did find an exception, but my hunch was that it was going to be short-lived. A sixth grade teacher who had made brief but enthusiastic use of ThinkAbout for a few weeks (until a school schedule change prevented her from continuing) noted one television series that her students liked but she did not:

> I've used television in my classroom since 1967 and I have never before had a program that I didn't like but the kids liked. But this year we are using Draw-a-Man, which I think is new. I don't like it, but the kids do, so we'll continue to watch it. The kids and I both like ThinkAbout.

Of course, teacher interest in viewing a program is not enough to surmount overt resistance from above or below. But I heard of no instance where pupils objected to television over the interest of their teachers, and I talked to no teachers who claimed they used television over the objection of their principals. It seems quite likely that there are principals bitterly opposed to television in

the classroom, but I did not encounter them in this study. On the other hand, only one principal expressed more than passing interest in classroom television. My hunch is that principals regard instructional television about the way they regard classroom films: they have a place, but there are always a few teachers who "take advantage" and begin using the media in lieu of instruction rather than as an adjunct to it.

I draw attention to the question of "Who are the teacher-users of television?" with the intent of suggesting that producers like AIT might attend more carefully to who their users are and how they might be better served than to attempt to please everyone, with little hope of achieving such a goal and considerable risk for trying to do so. I do not know how extensive a "taxonomy" of users needs to be. The simple taxonomy I describe includes only categorical non-users, casual users, and willing users.

It seems to me that attention should go almost exclusively to teachers who fall into the willing user category. Should that seem reasonable advice (or characterize prevailing practice) I might add two further comments.

First, teacher-users may not be willing or even able to explicate precisely why they use television, what help they need in the classroom, or how else television might better serve them. Thus, while I recommend that the level of attention be directed at teacher-users, I would find other ways than simply polling them (e.g., by also using case studies, small conferences, extended interviews) to identify problems and possibilities.

Second, I would insist that the level of inquiry should stay

strictly with teacher-users themselves. I have been amazed in this inquiry at how many "experts" there are on the topic of instructional television. My suspicion is that these people speak about classroom teachers but not for them.

(Teachers voiced a parallel criticism--a perennial one, but always true to some extent--that the people who developed this series obviously worked with educators but were not so obviously in touch with classroom teachers or kids. Consistent with that complaint, I found virtually no one except classroom teachers themselves who had ever watched a ThinkAbout program in the presence of an intact classroom of fifth or sixth graders.)

A. Categorical Nonusers

I owe it to my teacher friends far more than to my skills as a field worker that I was able to identify what is probably the most important category of teachers in terms of instructional television: the categorical nonusers. Here are the comments of two of them.

> (Male fifth-sixth grade teacher:) I never use it. I never even turn it on at school. I figure that children can watch it all day long when they are not in school so they don't need it in class. I don't use films, television, or anything. No serious teachers use it. The only teacher who uses it in our building is just lazy--she wants to get out of work. A lot of teachers do use it, but I think it's just a cop-out.

> (Female sixth grade teacher, middle school:) No one in our school uses television in class. The librarian uses our one set to watch the Today Show. Kids are televisioned to death. They don't even want to watch--and especially on our black-and-white sets!

I confronted the first of these teachers with the enthusiastic prediction of a staff member at the State Department of Education

who works with instructional television. Two weeks into the new school year (September 1979), he told me over the telephone:

> I'd predict that in three years nearly 50% of all the fifth and sixth grade teachers in the state will be using ThinkAbout. And it's all on a voluntary basis.

"And I'd be willing to bet," my friend retorted, "that no more than 1% of the elementary teachers use it and that no junior or senior high teacher ever uses it."

In schools, among strangers who couldn't help but wonder what my interest was in a newly produced television series, I did not hear such categorical pronouncements. I do not know if teachers respond so boldly in mailed questionnaires. But I imagine that there is a formidable and probably large group among teachers who not only have no intention of using television in their classrooms but who cast aspersions on their colleagues who do.

A media specialist who has worked in instructional television for two decades warned against stereotyping teachers who use television (the way nonusers do) and pointed out that in her experience she sometimes has found teachers who had taught for years without television and suddenly became very excited about it and did a good job with it. But I think she helped me to characterize the nonusers as teachers who feel (insist) that they can do it better themselves. As she pointed out, they tend to be teachers who do not "need" television, who do not have time for it, and who feel they already have many other things to do that are "exciting" (e.g., as good as, or better than, television).

Here is a categorical nonuser's reaction (the fifth-sixth

grade teacher quoted above) to a videotape of a particular ThinkAbout program (#41, "Summarizing"):

> It says so little for a 15-minute program. Of course kids would love it; they'd just sit there and watch, with no work. But what is thought-provoking about this episode? Three precocious little kids running the life of an 18-year-old to help him get a job; it doesn't make sense. It's everything I think of when I think of educational television. All it needs is a catchy song, and it will be another Sesame Street. What's its purpose?

If some teachers are receptive users and others are as opposed as this teacher (who is, incidentally, a former drama major, a language-arts-oriented teacher, and an avid television watcher--mostly of the Public Broadcasting System variety) then it would seem to me producers have an easier task if they attend most carefully to their users rather than try to proselyte or to produce programs that will capture "everyone."

One final group of nonusers are teachers whose previous experience with television has set them firmly against it and whose convictions are born of a self-righteousness that says, "I gave it a fair trial." Frustration with scheduling problems, resulting in numerous ThinkAbout programs being shown out of sequence or repeated, may have made some new converts for the categorical nonusers. (On the other hand, the exceptionally high quality of the programs may have created some of this frustration, in which case some of the claims reportedly received by the state's media specialist from teachers vowing "never to use television again" may have really been too-strongly-worded pleas to keep the programs in sequence.)

Old-timers in the region where I did my research recalled an earlier day when one of the large districts in the area also

produced instructional television programs. I believe that teachers in certain grades were then required to use the programs and to conduct follow-up activities. More than a decade has gone by since those days of local school district production, but teachers still refer to the days of "awful science and awful Spanish."

B. Casual Users

What would seem to be an easy and obvious dichotomization between users and nonusers is blurred by the presence of an in-between group of quasi- or casual users. (This is the group I described as the "casual enthusiasts" in a field report for December 1979.) This group presents the observer with a problem necessitating careful sorting to distinguish between what people do and what they say they do, a problem that intrigues anthropologists and confounds anthropology. For producers like AIT, casual users pose a different dilemma: should this group be included in the "target audience" for an instructional television series? My personal opinion is that casual users must be heard but do not warrant undue attention to their reactions to existing programs or to the planning and field testing of future ones.

I would characterize these casual users as somewhat capricious, teachers of rather low commitment to actually using television regardless of what they say about using it. Perhaps their patronage, whether of a particular series or of ITV in general, should be thought of as a bonus that can be given but not earned. At least in the ThinkAbout case, the decisions that casual user-teachers made seemed to be quite independent of the program itself. Following,

I suggest six different types of casual users. The types are not mutually exclusive and, like all the types and categories I suggest in this report, are intended only as suggestive, not all-inclusive.

1. Novelty users. The nice thing about novelty users--teachers eager to give a new television program (or a new anything) a try in their classrooms--is that they provide an immediate and enthusiastic response for the developer of educational materials. The drawback is that such easy and early adopters are a fickle lot. It is the newness or novelty that attracts them, and the duration of their interest may be only until the next new item appears on the scene.

In my own observations, a teacher who had been quick to adopt ThinkAbout in October of 1979 was equally quick to announce in the spring of 1980 that in addition to competition from other classroom activities the viewing of ThinkAbout would soon be competing with a new program, 3-2-1-Contact. In spite of her seeming acclaim when the program started, she was strongly considering switching over to an even newer program before the end of the year.

I should point out that one of the things we cannot know from our observations this year is the extent to which any or all of the teachers we observed were novelty users whose enthusiasm was related to ThinkAbout's newness. I got the impression from teachers who liked and used the series that they probably will use parts of it again, particularly if they can select the clusters or programs they found most instructive (and implying that they expect to have the series available on videotape).

I think one must be wary even of teacher enthusiasm. Like most respondents in social research, teachers like to tell researchers what they think researchers want to hear, partly to please and partly, I have always suspected, to get rid of them as quickly as possible. Anticipating my visit, the media specialist in one school checked with upper grade teachers to see if perchance someone had begun using ThinkAbout without her knowledge. One teacher said that she had not watched it during this year (the first year of broadcast) but had "watched it last year and liked it very much." Such unbridled enthusiasm may not be helpful but it most certainly is instructive.

2. Pedestrian users. From a producer's point of view, there is another group of casual users who might be described by the pedestrian use they make of instructional television (or any instructional media). That they use the program certainly warrants including them in a strict head count, but the way they use it indicates virtually no commitment to its instructional purposes. One teacher whose class regularly viewed the series simply turned it on at the scheduled time and turned it off at the conclusion of the broadcast while pupils were leaving the classroom to go to another scheduled activity. "The program speaks for itself," she explained. If it had happened to be shown 15 minutes later in the day, one wonders if a different program would have had to speak for it! Marilyn Cohn reported a variation on this theme, which she described as "an updated version of the 'Friday afternoon movie' routine" (field report, February 15, 1980): Each Friday pupils in two fifth grade classrooms marched to the resource area, watched two videotaped

ThinkAbout programs taped back-to-back, and returned to their classes, all without teacher comment.

3. Thwarted users. I have already noted and do not wish further to belabor that the broadcast schedule in our state was badly garbled and provoked considerable annoyance--even anger--from teachers "trying" to use ThinkAbout. Similarly, I witnessed distressingly poor reception on distressingly outdated (black-and-white) sets in almost every classroom I visited. (In fact I saw only one program in one class that I would view as technically acceptable color reception, and even that teacher reported later in the term that she had been having reception difficulties.) What surprised me was not that teachers complained but that, in view of the fact that all the teachers with whom I talked experienced about the same degree of problems (i.e., the same mixed-up schedule, the same outdated equipment), some teachers found the problems virtually insurmountable while others simply took them in stride. Although my typology may cast the noncomplainers as unnecessarily stoic, I came to the conclusion that teachers with low commitment to the series--or to ITV generally--had an easy out in "blaming" their disinterest on problems beyond their control. For teachers who wanted to use the series, those same problems were annoying but were in no way sufficient to prevent them from using the program. One could, it seemed, be just as "thwarted" as one wished.

4. Promissory users. How easy to lament that one did not--and perhaps could not--use the program this year but certainly hopes to use it next year. Let me describe a specific instance, a teacher of a fifth-sixth grade combination who missed ThinkAbout this year but

hopes to use it next year, "especially if it's on videotape." I contacted him after he attended a county workshop about ThinkAbout presented by the state's media specialist. The teacher said that he had thought about making videotapes but never actually inquired to see if the equipment was available. He could not use the program on open broadcast because the times were wrong for his class schedule. The workshop (presented in March 1980, about a month before the first year's broadcasts were to end) was his first chance to see the program (along with the videotaped promotional program starring Steve Allen). Everyone attending the workshop received a teacher's guide. The teacher read over the guide and liked it. (He also won the door prize--a ThinkAbout T-shirt.) I inquired whether he had used television in class before. He said he had used it the previous year, although for the life of him, he could not remember the name of the program or what it dealt with.

5. Anxious users. Anxious users comprise a temporary category of teachers who originally decided to use the new series but then have second thoughts and, sooner or later, can be expected to stop watching the program. Marilyn Cohn portrayed an anxious user in one of her field reports. I would guess that teacher was on the verge of dropping ThinkAbout from her schedule. The teacher's comments included that programs provided nothing that could be sent home in the Friday folder and nothing to grade. "That's not what shows up on the tests," she declared; "they need to know their facts."

I encountered a teacher who expressed similar doubts: "Performance on television watching is not something I am rewarded for in this district," she reminded me. I felt that the message she was

giving me was "I shouldn't be doing this." Sure enough; next time I saw her, she wasn't. She continued to muster "evidence" that satisfied her that the program was "going right over the heads" of at least 2/3 of her class. A teacher down the hall from her expressed no similar anxiety: "I spend a reasonable enough time on basics. Fifteen minutes twice a week isn't going to make all that much difference."

6. Cyclical users. The comments made by the same fifth grade teacher just described as an anxious user also suggested another user pattern tied in to much bigger concerns reflecting swings or "changing fashions" that one sees on a longtime view of teaching. The feature shared with the other categories of users is that in this one too the decision about television use is not related to the quality of a particular program so much as it is related to the prevailing mood of the times. And the mood of the times is for the teaching of "basics," of particular skills related to the three R's rather than to generalized processes like problem solving. Reflecting on her own teaching, this teacher described where she was at present and even seemed to be wondering aloud if it was time to turn back:

> Over a thirty-year period of teaching I have tried being "inductive." I was once the biggest fan of inductive teaching you have ever seen, and it was pretty sloppy teaching. I am right back to precision teaching: ECRI, Disstar, Engleman-Becker. If you want them to learn--rote memory--it is a great way for little kids to learn. After they have written and memorized a bunch of stuff, then they can use it to think with. I think they [ThinkAbout] are asking children to think. I have got a class here, that many of them don't have the ability to think that way. Probably ThinkAbout is a great antidote to Engleman-Becker.

C. Willing Users

On one point everyone I spoke to during the year was in agreement: far greater use is made of television in elementary schools than in junior and senior high. Folk knowledge is that television is used "about five times as much" in elementary schools, a figure that led one enthusiast to insist that television programs for elementary schools therefore cost only 1/5 as much to produce!

I have already suggested that the group of willing users is the group I would want to know the most about if I were making production decisions. And in this group, as with nonusers and casual users, I believe there are also interesting differences that distinguish some users from others and invite attention to a careful examination of purposes and audiences. Here I extend the willing users category to include "would-be" users, teachers who seem to constitute part of the user group even though they may not be using television at all at a particular time.

1. Discrete users. Though on first blush this category, "discrete users," might seem the most desirable group of teacher viewers, I would imagine that the very discriminating teacher-user constitutes too small and too selective an audience to constitute a basis for general program development. The nice thing about these teachers is that they are open to television as a classroom resource; they are probably willing to consider every other possible resource as well. The point is that they know exactly what they need to augment their instructional program. My guess is that such teachers, like the teacher I describe in the first case study, will eventually "pick apart" ThinkAbout. Once they are familiar with the series,

they will pick and choose exactly the programs they want--from video-tapes--and they will either use only those programs or will not show anything at all from the series. For them, it does not take 50 15-minute programs to get the "meat" out of the series. ThinkAbout's themes ("Hey Wait, . . ." etc.) and clusters will be subordinated to each teacher's own scope and sequence.

2. Content-shy or focus-shy users. This group would seem to me to constitute the best target group for instructional television. These are teachers who feel they are in danger of running out of activities before they run out of time or who feel that they are "at sea" once they get away from instruction in the basics. The elementary school curriculum provides a standard repertory of "second-order" topics in the areas of social studies, science, and health. Most schools also have ample (but not very interesting) materials for the classroom teaching of these areas. And most elementary school teachers feel that topics from these areas ought to be given more than a passing nod in the instructional program. The "content-shy" teacher may have developed a few satisfactory "teaching units" in these areas but does not have enough such units to "fill" a year. Any supplementary material that comes along helps to fill the void, assuage consciences, and minimize the risk of having nothing left to teach. For such teachers ThinkAbout was a potential godsend—especially if it came at the "right time." Chances are that for these teachers the right time meant not only a time when there was no conflict with the daily schedule but also a time during the afternoon. My second case study teacher said point-blank: "If ThinkAbout came only in the morning, I probably wouldn't use it. I don't want

to give up the morning." In the morning his class worked diligently on basics, and there was no doubt in his mind where each child was and what each needed to do next. That confidence had certainly evaporated by the afternoon--and so did the feeling that the pupils needed to be quite so diligent or so singly preoccupied with skills. Sylvia Hart-Landsberg reported a similar problem as perceived by her case study teacher--the need for "something to do" during the afternoon contrasted with a clearly defined program for the morning (Hart-Landsberg, field report, February 6, 1980). My sense is that such teachers would insist that "ThinkAbout fits right in" with their instructional program but that in fact it is just the other way around; they fit their classroom program right into ThinkAbout. ThinkAbout offered expert help in a "soft" curricular area, and that was the very help they needed.

3. Energy-shy users. It was a coincidence of my own schedule that led me to wonder whether television use might be related not only to a needed boost in the instructional program but to a needed boost in energy for the instructors as well. Although I have interview data from teachers who watched the "repeat" broadcasts on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, I could only visit in classrooms where teachers used live broadcasts on Monday and Wednesday afternoons. Although scant attention has been paid to the energy drain of teaching, teachers themselves are well aware of teaching as "exhausting" work. My hunch is that the extent of personal exhaustion even provides a personal measure of having "tried to do one's best" on those teaching days when one has no other adequate measure of one's accomplishments.

Most of my ThinkAbout visits were made during afternoons--the time when teachers are most apt to run out of steam. Two teacher-users of ThinkAbout specifically mentioned how tired they became in the afternoon; my second case study teacher once told me that I had "saved his life" when I took over for him during the afternoon story-reading session so that he could go get a cup of tea and take a brief respite from what was becoming a particularly long day. Advantaged by coming into their classrooms when I was still "fresh" (on Monday and Wednesday I don't meet classes, so my own energy level remains high) I paid more attention to teacher "energy levels." I mused that I wished I could get an afternoon blood-sugar count for the teacher who proved to be my most loyal viewer of the program as I watched him appear to "run down" during the afternoon. Though ThinkAbout provided him with the kind of curriculum boost I described above, I know it also provided an energy boost as well.

One problem with linking instructional television to a teacher "energy shortage" is that the issue of energy is itself not discussed outside of the teacher ranks. I cannot imagine that teachers would be receptive to having ITV touted as an energy saver. Yet the energy problem for teachers, and the potential help of television in resolving it, are both real, perhaps even quantitatively measurable. While AIT might well balk at the idea of instructional television acting as the Geritol of the classroom teacher set, I think the topic of teacher energy warrants serious attention. Teachers who select television as an instructional supplement may include a large number of individuals who experience a noticeable energy depletion during the day.

A practical recommendation stemming from this suggestion of a tentative relationship between teacher energy and teacher adoption of television might be to question the "traditional" practice of scheduling both morning and afternoon showings of a series and to test the alternative of showing a series at different times but during afternoons only. My hunch that ThinkAbout is more widely used in the afternoon could easily be checked among known teacher users. In the only two classrooms I visited in which locally made videotapes were made and later replayed, ThinkAbout was shown in the afternoon. If that is the prevalent pattern among videotape users, it would lend further support to the idea of ThinkAbout (and perhaps ITV more generally) as an activity that teachers prefer to schedule for the afternoon and consciously assign to their afternoon schedule if they have a choice.

4. Media-prone users. At least one teacher mentioned that her use of the ThinkAbout program this year was in part related to a self-conscious and explicitly stated teaching goal to make more use of audiovisual media in general, including not only television but filmstrips and the overhead projector. She described herself as a teacher who has always used "lots of films, even if they don't necessarily tie in with exactly what we are studying." She felt she tended to neglect other media sources. Prior to watching ThinkAbout, she had used ITV only once before in her fifth grade classrooms, and that had been five years earlier when she had watched a series on nutrition.

Teachers are more inclined to refer to others than to themselves as "high" users of media, because, I think, the line between high use

and excessive use is a thin one. But there most certainly are media-prone teachers, and they virtually guarantee a viewer audience for any effort at instructional media. They may not be the discriminating audience one might like, but they are an audience. When judgments about the effectiveness of ITV must be made on the basis of simple nose counts, the media-prone teachers are probably nice to have around. But if these teachers make their judgments on "running time" rather than instructional content, I doubt if they can be of much help in efforts to improve the quality of instructional media.

5. Would-be users. Just as the magnitude of the public school enterprise guarantees viewers for virtually any program, so the size and complexity of the system guarantees that not everyone who might be interested in ITV in general, or in a particular series like ThinkAbout, will necessarily be able to view it. Although the following subcategories are rather obvious, I think they need to be mentioned.

Schedules beyond the control of the classroom teacher are one obvious reason for a teacher to be unable to view a series. Time and time again teachers expressed a preference for having programs available on videotape so that they would not have to be locked into a tight broadcast schedule, could show the programs when they wished, could preview if they wished, and could be selective if they chose.

Scheduling also includes more than the day and hour of broadcast. For example, one teacher started to use the program in October but then went on an extended medical leave. A short-term substitute followed the regular teacher's schedule, but when it became apparent that the regular teacher was not returning, the position had to be

restaffed with a long-term substitute. The long-term substitute decided not to continue with ThinkAbout. In another school the advent of a new school-wide Title I program in math midway through the school year brought about such a total change in the program that a teacher who had been watching the program with her fifth grade class could not continue. One of the case study teachers described later in this report only met with her special class one afternoon a week. She was limited to viewing no more than half the programs in the series, and had her class met on a different afternoon of the week she might not have been able to watch the programs at all.

In one school system, district-wide policy may have precluded some teachers from using the program, although it was never clear how firm the policy was, who had made the decision, or whether teachers were really observing it. The question arose early in the year whether it might be advisable to restrict the viewing of ThinkAbout, a program advertised as suitable for fifth and sixth graders, to either the fifth or the sixth grade. Second- or third-hand accounts had it that the elementary principals informally agreed to use the series at the fifth grade. Whether or not that agreement was really made, no one was certain, but it was true that most of the classrooms in that district that used ThinkAbout were fifth grade ones. The decision itself is somewhat paradoxical: it was made before teachers had any classroom experience with ThinkAbout; it was made by people who themselves would not be using the program and probably had never seen it; and for the first year, it would have made no difference to let both fifth and sixth graders view it, even

if the program was henceforth to be used only at fifth grade!

Teachers must also have heard about ThinkAbout in order to use it in their classes. I stress the term heard because it seemed to me that word of mouth was the effective means by which ThinkAbout had come to the attention of most classroom teachers. Media specialists who knew of the program often referred to announcements they had received in school distributions, but classroom teachers invariably heard of the programs from media specialists, other teachers, or building principals. Although the state media specialist claimed that every fifth and sixth grade teacher in the state received an announcement about the program at the beginning of the school year, a number of teachers categorically denied that they had ever received any written announcement. (At least one teacher also admitted that he never looks at the "junk mail" he receives at school.) One teacher-user reported first learning about ThinkAbout from a district mailout. Another (a longtime user of ITV) said she spotted it when she made her annual check of available programs at the beginning of the year. Every other teacher-user had heard about the program from a fellow teacher or from a media specialist. A member of the central office staff in one district where ThinkAbout was not being widely used felt that the series was quite outstanding and needed to be brought to the attention of more teachers. As a member of the advisory board of a newly established regional teacher center she required that a memorandum be sent from that office to all intermediate teachers in the region. Although the letter was sent, I found no teacher who ever mentioned it or remembered receiving it.

As food for thought I close this section with two observations

on the puzzling nature of dissemination. First, in one school where I interviewed both the media specialist and a fifth grade teacher, each individual graciously noted that it was the other who had brought ThinkAbout to his/her attention. Second, in two different schools a teacher reported having heard of or having been reminded about ThinkAbout from a teacher at the same grade level in the classroom next door. Curiously, however, in neither case did the recommending teacher use the series in his own classroom, although he commended it highly to his colleague.

QUESTION THREE: WHAT ARE SOME IMMEDIATE LESSONS (BOTH OLD AND NEW) TO BE LEARNED AS A RESULT OF THINKABOUT'S FIRST YEAR?

In this section I identify and/or emphasize some of the immediate lessons from ThinkAbout in year one. I begin by noting some things that were not observed, things that might have proved a great satisfaction to those with a vested interest in the program had we been able to document them. Then I will briefly outline what may be a list of problems and issues already quite familiar to those familiar with instructional television.

A. Things Not Observed

In a field report, Sylvia Hart-Landsberg made what I consider to be the most important observation regarding an "unseen event" in our field research:

> I have never observed a child act perplexed, strive to understand a "cluster" of programs or the series as a whole, or apply one of its skills in a new context. (Hart-Landsberg, field report, February 6, 1980)

Her statement pertains to my observations as well. I should add, however, that my second case study teacher reported that there did seem to be some general carry-over from the programs to a subsequent set of classroom social studies reports, and he specifically noted that one pupil self-consciously followed a model presented in a ThinkAbout program in presenting her own report. Furthermore, but quite possibly influenced by my presence, I once watched that teacher recast a discussion of a classroom (deportment) problem into a ThinkAbout format, although the transformation was

impromptu and not particularly successful. (Marilyn Cohn reported an instance in which a teacher organized a new science unit on the basis of the ThinkAbout strategy, "What do I know? What do I need to know?" I did not observe a teacher make any comparable use of ThinkAbout for planning or presenting any instructional unit.)

I did not find anyone other than a member of the AIT staff who heralded ThinkAbout as "the most ambitious use of instructional television ever made."

I did not find any teachers who referred to themselves as "ThinkAbout teachers" or any pupils who referred to themselves as "ThinkAbouters." My hunch is that at least by grade 6 most pupils would be annoyed by that idea.

I did not find any classroom teacher who viewed every program in the series this year. I did not find any teachers who said that they would not want to miss a single program if they view the series again next year.

I did not find any educators other than classroom teachers who had actually watched the program with a class.

I did not see any use of My Weekly Reader or hear any reference to it, either to the regular ThinkAbout feature or to the magazine itself, except in the classroom that the entire staff visited during our Portland meeting. There, we found that the teacher was unaware of the ThinkAbout feature, although I believe some of her pupils realized it was there.

I did not hear of, or talk to, any teachers who began using the series once it was well underway. Once the series was underway, it did not seem to continue to gain additional viewers. I did

talk with two teachers who were considering the idea of previewing several programs (if they could get a videotape) during the last weeks of school in order to decide whether to use the series next year. Thus, I learned of a number of dropouts as the year progressed; if there were "drop-ins," I did not hear about them.

I mention these specific "nonevents" because the producers may otherwise wonder if I observed things important to them but inadvertently failed to note them in the report.

B. "Awful" Television

I have already noted that the field research resulted in my watching some of the poorest television reception on some antiquated black-and-white sets. The only two programs I saw in color were on videotape, and during one of those programs, the picture was marred by a horizontal line that continued throughout the broadcast; I could only watch it briefly. Sound and picture were at times impossible to discern in every classroom; the sets never seemed clearly in focus. In one classroom, the problem of a faulty on-off switch had been remedied by "hot-wiring" so that the set was "on" if plugged in and "off" only when unplugged.

Whether AIT has some obligation or sees some opportunity to promote better equipment for classroom reception, I do not know. Ridiculous as it may sound, if the equipment I saw is characteristic of what is available in the nation generally, AIT might just as well go back to black-and-white production. Why, I wonder, are teachers and pupils willing to contend with such awful reception? Is television viewing really that compelling or just the "lesser of

evils" compared to other classroom alternatives?

I might also point out that classroom television sets, whether permanent features or wheeled about from room to room, are invariably set high--about twice as high as for home viewing. In one of my case study classrooms, the pupils were often allowed to watch the program while lying on a carpet in the center of the room or to sit in chairs or on a sofa at the back of the classroom. The effect of the high perch for the television set was to increase the distance between viewer and screen, though neither teacher nor pupils ever thought to find a different cart. Thus, institutional purposes are well served (classroom television sets ought to be on high, sturdy carts) but instructional purposes may not be.

In addition to incredible foul-ups with the broadcast schedule, I observed that programs in our area occasionally started as much as four minutes late. On at least two occasions, sound and picture were out of synchronization.

If videotape is the answer--and it is at least being regarded as though it is the answer--then the tapes themselves are in short supply, whether in terms of blank tapes for teacher and district use or of recorded tapes as a school, district, or county service unit resource. Anticipating the amount of tape needed to record a new series, the video specialist in one district pondered which of his previously recorded programs he would now have to erase because he simply did not have the tape capacity to record the new series. The county media specialist noted that the media center of the local Educational Service District boasts a media collection of about 12,000 items, including about 9,500 films (7,500 titles).

And videotapes? Less than 50, he estimated in January, 1980. The state media specialist was providing a set of tapes of the full ThinkAbout series to any county office that would sponsor a ThinkAbout workshop during the Spring of 1980; if each program is one tape, his gift will more than double the size of the local county service unit's videotape library!

C. Previewing and Use of the Teacher's Guide

Like all of us, teachers are inclined to "have it both ways." The problem of previewing programs is a good example of contradictory preferences. The novelty of ThinkAbout--a brand-new series, never before viewed--may have been one of the biggest attractions to its first-year viewers. Many teachers mentioned the problem of not being able to preview and how they felt unprepared to make the best use of the series. But this opinion must be tempered with two unrelated observations. First, not all teachers expressed this concern; one very flexible teacher noted that as she realized the programs were not necessarily going to be broadcast in order, she simply guessed at the program and made a few comments about it as the television set was warming up. If she had "guessed wrong" she read the correct program activities in the teacher's guide as the pupils viewed the program. The teacher who complained the loudest about the inability to preview was the one teacher who actually had that opportunity, since she had her pupils videotape the program for later showing and might easily have previewed it by herself after school. (One teacher tried previewing the program on the same channel the day before his class viewed it.

When even those programs got mixed up, he reportedly quit watching the series altogether.) One must also raise the question of how many teachers will take time to preview 60 quarter-hour programs!

The preview problem may be something of a ritual complaint--valid but not very powerful. I did hear of one series which ran a program preview for teachers who wished to watch it the prior evening in their own homes. I do not know whether that alternative is a practical one.

The teacher's guide for ThinkAbout is probably the most practical answer to the preview problem, and I devoted most of one field report (February 6, 1980) to suggestions about the guide. Let me repeat here the suggestions that the guide be less wordy, contain less extraneous material, and have one page devoted to each program, so that teachers know exactly where to look for the help they want. My impression is that teachers do use the guide, but not in a contemplative way prior to the program. They skim the guide as the program itself is in progress. If they want to "set" the attention of their pupils (and there seems to be some feeling these days that questions raised prior to the presentation of material--questions designed as attention-directing devices--are more valuable than questions posed afterward) they found rather little help in the guide as presently conceived. Most of their reading is done as they watch the programs with the class. What teachers seemed to want afterward were two kinds of help: follow-up discussion questions, and follow-up activities. My feeling is that the guide might have focussed more on the intent

of the program, less on the story content.

It is important to recognize that even with a gigantic effort to get the guides into the hands of teachers, teachers did not necessarily have them. Every program began with the spoken and written announcement (television never takes chances; if it's important, you hear it as well as see it) that a teacher's guide was available by writing the State Department of Education at such-and-such an address. Nevertheless, teachers complained of not having the manual and of not knowing how to get one. They would ask but not write. In Kay Sloan's memo, she observed that without the guide, she could not make some of the fine points imbedded in the programs. Could it be that the points were too fine? Might more information be given in the program itself (perhaps at the beginning, and directed at the pupils, rather than at the end, where it might appear to usurp teacher prerogatives)? Why not follow the precedent of television itself? Take no chance that the message might get lost: build it right into the program rather than depend on a guide as supplement!

D. Fostering Implementation

A well-situated staff member of the only metropolitan school district in the state commented to me that the people who developed ThinkAbout "seem to have a lot of confidence in their material but have little knowledge of local school politics in such matters as the power of the principal." AIT's position is hardly one of casual indifference, however. Rather, AIT staff make a point of not interfering with the internal workings of its sponsor agencies.

AIT's director of research, Saul Rockman, explains that position in a letter I received in February 1980:

> One of the unpolished facets of a consortium project is that the participating states have total control over the use of the materials: they can do as they please. For us it is also a question of tact. How do we go about telling someone that they or someone they supervise has goofed up, especially if you have to go back and ask them for money for the next project?

Perhaps there is a middle ground. AIT might, for example, make its resources and expertise available in the implementation phases as well as in the production phases, perhaps offering suggestions, doing demonstrations, or even subcontracting to handle the promotion task (at cost) for member states and provinces who feel inadequate for the task.

At least in our state, the State Department of Education is understaffed, and my impression is that local educators prefer to keep it that way. But that means that its staff members have incredibly busy schedules just to handle routine assignments. There is simply no one available to give full time to new tasks. The introduction of ThinkAbout is a case in point. The first official presentation to educators invited to the state capital to learn about ThinkAbout was reported to me to be one of the "driest and most boring" presentations ever made. That presentation seemed to set the pace. Dissemination efforts proceeded so slowly that beginning in March, the media specialist for the state simply had to block off two months and personally carry the word out to the schools (in the form of after-school workshops presented through county media centers). There had been more ambitious plans for

heralding ThinkAbout by hiring a professional actor to make regional presentations, but those plans fell though. Without being "pushy," AIT might still have been ready with some backup ideas and resources. The quality of an educational innovation is not, by itself, sufficient to bring it to the attention of its would-be users.

The suggestion was made for fostering implementation by establishing a network of liaison people, including not only media personnel at individual schools but classroom teachers as well, perhaps offering a modest sum of money for such duties as keeping a user panel and convening them during the year (with expenses paid) to share their reactions. Even our presence as observers seemed to have a catalytic effect on ThinkAbout use. Might not more have been done to enlist teachers as users and to reinforce their interest?

E. Apprehensions and Misunderstandings

"What do I know? What do I need to know?" That pair of questions from one of the ThinkAbout clusters can be applied to the series itself: What do school people need to know about ThinkAbout? Four broad topics are reviewed here: rights, membership, obligations, and rationale.

Rights

Who can do what with videotapes made for school use? The problem of rights has never been terribly bothersome to individual teachers, and I heard no new concern expressed by teachers about video rights. I suppose if you only have one or two videotapes available for recording a program you want, the probl m is not of paramount importance. But I was surprised at the confusion

expressed with district and county level people, and even if their confusion is a natural consequence of confusion extant in the field of copyright law, I am not sure it is a good thing. A district-level media specialist who tapes any programs requested by teachers in the district noted that there are some differences between commercial broadcasts and public broadcasts, but he seemed unable to say more than that tapes made from commercial broadcasts were not supposed to be kept very long. Reflecting on the modest scale that he did any taping at all and the competition for tape space (i.e., taping a new series generally necessitated wiping out something taped earlier) he commented that he doubted that the issue was very critical and wondered how anyone would ever enforce it. At county level, a media specialist recognized that ThinkAbout could be videotaped but was uncertain if there was a time limit: "We have rights that we can videotape the series in our state and keep them. For the year, I guess; something like that." The state level media specialist expressed no uncertainty: "We are an owner because this state is a consortium member. We can tape the series and duplicate it." My point is that the same sense of ownership felt at state level was not felt so clearly at county and district levels. And that leads to uncertainty number two.

Membership

Who needs to know if a state is a consortium member, and what do they need to know? Can "states" really be members of something, and if so, who needs to know about that membership? Only from a member of the State Department of Education did I hear the term "we" in reference to consortium participation.

Obligations

Teacher uncertainties centered on what constituted "proper use," sorting out obligations from options. Like their students, teachers too want to know, "Do we have to do this?" And like their students, teachers seem to prefer options; they are co-opted only grudgingly. One teacher's comments express the range from a concern that she might not be using the series as "they" hoped she would to her candid conclusion that in fact she was going to use it just as she pleased:

> How committed should I be to trying the complete series? It gives some activities in the guide. Some of them work and some don't. What if I do not watch all the programs and do not do all the activities and just do what I want? Is that OK? Or would "they" prefer that I try to do what they suggest in the guide?
>
> I am committed to watching the program, but I don't know if I am committed to doing all these little activities here. I will do something with the kids, but I just don't have two hours a day to spend on this series.

Rationale

Some teachers also noted the need to be able to explain, and if necessary even defend, their use of classroom television. I sensed no feelings of overt defensiveness about the use of television (although my seeming interest in ThinkAbout may have led teachers to assume that I am pro-television), but teachers did mention that they felt obliged to be able to explain the instructional basis for their use if pressed for such an explanation. A fifth grade teacher volunteered:

> I need to be prepared if parents ask, "Why are you using this? Don't the kids get enough television at home?" That's when it's important

> to be able to explain my reasons and the value of the program--and even invite parents to come watch it with us. I'm prepared with reasons. I have the teacher's guide to show them, and I can ask them to visit.

F. Some Other Inherent Problems

I have already noted that my involvement in this project prompted opinions from virtually everyone on issues related to instructional television. Similarly, the focus on a particular series prompted a lot of opinions about the series--what was right with it, what was wrong with it, what might be improved. On most issues, opinion was divided. I think the producers can take that as a healthy sign. Perhaps to old-timers in the business, the following comments are similar to the criticisms that come up following every new effort:

1. The programs should have been longer vs. the series was too long and demanded too big a commitment.
2. The programs took too long to make a point and should be faster-paced vs. you've got to make the point clear and repeat it over and over if you want kids to get it.
3. The later programs were better vs. the later programs didn't seem as good.
4. Some of the content was "dumb" vs. the programs were always interesting.
5. The people who produced these shows aren't working with kids vs. this series was developed in cooperation with educators and classroom teachers.
6. The actors are believable and of the right age vs. the actors are too professional.
7. The kids forget; there's no carry-over from program to program vs. evidence of programs and situations remembered months later.

8. The programs are well produced vs. the programs are overproduced.

9. There was good variety and sequence vs. the programs covered topics too superficially and moved from topic to topic too quickly.

QUESTION FOUR: WHAT ARE SOME BROADER ISSUES RELATED TO INSTRUCTIONAL TELEVISION THAT HAVE BEEN SUGGESTED BY THIS FIELD STUDY OF THINKABOUT?

This fourth and final question provides opportunity to "flag" some areas that were of potential interest to me and may be of interest for others who need to think about ThinkAbout or who are engaged in planning, assessing, or interpreting the purposes, effects, or context of instructional programs in general. If some of these thoughts seem strictly "academic," that is because I am an academic. I enjoy such excursions. In applied research such as this, I feel a certain obligation to note what has intrigued me as well as to remark upon what I assume to be of interest to the client.

A. The Context and Problems of Researching ThinkAbout

I must confess that I was flabergasted to learn that part of the assessment of the effects of ThinkAbout included the periodic testing of a national sample of "treatment groups" (i.e., classrooms in which ThinkAbout was regularly viewed) compared with a like number of "control groups" (i.e., classrooms in which ThinkAbout was not viewed). That absurdity did not escape the attention of teachers, for these days teachers have become very (excessively?) test-conscious and are inclined to assess their classroom activities in terms of the question, "Will this show up on their test scores at the end of year?" Inadvertently I wonder if some of those "control group" teachers didn't set out

to "teach their heads off," while ThinkAbout teachers may well have wondered how in the world each ThinkAbout program could possibly contribute to an achievement score difference. (Estimating, approximating, returning lost puppies, and finding one's way out of the woods are not the proficiencies measured by achievement tests.)

Now, with a year's opportunity to reflect on the problem, to observe the program in use, and to interview or chat with dozens of people about it, my position remains unchanged, but I am less adamant about it. I do not have an alternative to offer. Behind the seemingly simple task of trying to assess what learning may have occurred as a direct--or even indirect--consequence of ThinkAbout, we find ourselves confronted with that awesome problem: measuring school effects.

We certainly did not claim that our case studies would get us into the "minds" of the pupils. But the issue proved even more complicated than that. Any classroom visitor has some purpose: our purposes were quickly linked with the program. Children and teachers alike always responded to me in terms of that "point of entree." (Sylvia Hart-Landsberg, with her very extended visiting, may have been most successful in ameliorating the effects of our too-obvious interest in the program and reactions to it.) I found no casual way to get pupils to discuss ThinkAbout with me; I suspect that teachers as well supplied me with the kinds of information and positive reaction that they assumed I wanted to hear. A typical example follows in which a teacher attempted to get a response from a fifth grade pupil on my behalf and in which I tried

to extend the dialogue:

Teacher: Judy, what do you think about ThinkAbout and why?

Judy: I think it is good. I think it is interesting to watch, because there is different activities like the boat one and the brainstorming. I like them all.

Teacher: Does it make you think how to solve problems in your own life? Or in the classroom?

Judy: Yes, like you are in a fight, or something, you might say, "Let's talk it over."

Observer: (Wolcott) You mentioned programs you remember. The boat one and the one on brainstorming.

Judy: And the one at the school when people kept painting on the walls, like bad words and that. [Her reference is to the brainstorming program, not to a different one.]

Observer: Do you remember the one about the boats?

Judy: They were racing. They went down the rivers in canoes and everywhere. They were competing against a different team.

Observer: Right. What was the point in that one? Do you remember?

Judy: I don't remember. I just remember watching it.

A fourth grade boy who watched the program in a "gifted class" comprised of himself and three fifth grade pupils answered my query about whether he learned things from the program somewhat equivocally: "Sometimes you learn things; sometimes you don't."

One possible answer to the great measurement questions in formal education is to question whether they are in fact all that great. If the effort to measure ThinkAbout "effects" through achievement scores dismayed me, the effort to complement that aspect of the research with "observer" studies delighted me and won my

participation in this yearlong effort. And the shift in research emphasis, to ask questions like, "What can we learn from the first year of implementation of a new program like ThinkAbout?" delights me even more. What I think we learned about has more to do with classroom processes and teacher procedures, work that seems to support the general idea that (in Valerie Janesick's words) "the teacher is the curriculum." With ThinkAbout, that means that the lesson the teacher perceives is the one that gets taught, regardless of the message intended by the producers.

I hope that those who sponsored the case studies are not dismayed by what may appear as a critical tone in these reports. In part, simply being analytical often results in being perceived as critical, especially when the issue being analyzed is tied to close personal or professional interests. Further, there was an inclination of educators at all levels to tell us what was wrong or worrisome or got in the way. For my part, I often emphasized that one of the few ways I might be able to repay teachers for their time was to act as a pipeline to those who produce instructional television and to convey their suggestions and recommendations.

Perhaps I need to emphasize here that in these kinds of inquiry one is never sure exactly when things have gone right. What can you say when the right program comes on, when it was right "on target" for the class, and when the subsequent discussion or follow-up activity suggested that the lesson was learned? We still cannot be sure what the pupils learned. So we conclude that the program was "good," and then, trying to be helpful, add something like, "The questions in the teacher's guide might have been better."

Personally, I would have preferred it if the sponsor of the research had not been the very organization that had produced the series. I think perhaps we ask too much of the producers or developers of educational materials in insisting that once the materials are produced they must divest themselves of any commitment to them and must instead set out to view them in the most objective manner. My impression is that the producers of ThinkAbout are proud of their new series, and justifiably so. As with proud parents, though, one is inclined to wonder just how much latitude one has in responding to the question, "Well, what do you think of our baby?"

On the other hand, if AIT had not sponsored this research, I doubt that it would have been conducted at all. Apparently, consortium members expect AIT to demonstrate on its own behalf that it has done a good job. I thought that my research might be of some interest to media people at state or county level but got not the faintest hint that this was the case. Teachers with whom I worked expressed interest in my "findings" but my guess is that their real interest revolved around how I portrayed them and whether they "measured up" to unseen colleagues. The greatest interest in my research was expressed by graduate students who took a class in "Ethnographic Methods in Educational Research" during the year and heard me refer to my fieldwork for the project. As part of her work in that class, one student accepted my invitation to do an interview assignment by locating and interviewing ThinkAbout teachers. Her splendid interviews and observations extended the range of my own sources and perceptions; in turn, her

involvement in the research created interest in it, but not so much for what I had to say about the series as for a model which she might use in doing subsequent research of her own.

Regardless of the potential conflict of interest, I think we must applaud AIT's commitment to research and to subcontract the project to an independent organization (Western Michigan's Evaluation Center) in addition to whatever in-house and ongoing research program it has. "Out here" in the field, my experience of the past year is that we have been given the broadest of frameworks to work in and all the professional autonomy one could ask for.

B. The "Cultural" Content of ThinkAbout

I would be remiss as an anthropological observer not to take notice of the way that the content of the ThinkAbout programs reflects so very nicely the cultural "values" or cultural "assumptions" of mainstream society and its schools--including even ThinkAbout's very self-conscious recognition of "women and minorities." There is no implied criticism in the fact that the programs have culture content--it is hard to imagine what they would be like without it. What is anthropologically fascinating is how well they epitomize values that are singularly Western and are constantly reinforced in the schools. Problem solving itself, for example, is presented as an entirely linear, rational, and analytical process, carried almost to the point of parody in ThinkAbout as situation after situation drove the hero or heroine of the program to the card catalog in the local library.

A program in which I was particularly struck with cultural content was Program 23, "There are Many Ways To Go," a program in which the self-conscious message about alternatives seemed instead to emphasize our cultural boundedness. The story deals with three girls and their individual (and presumably diverse) approaches to an ice-skating contest. Almost reflexively I listed some of the cultural assumptions, the "implicit cultural messages," that one might cite in identifying some dominant cultural themes pervasive in our society, viz., each girl in the story perceived herself as being in competition with the others; success meant being the winner (in a zero-sum game in which others would have to lose so someone could win); success comes with hard work (talent is somehow assumed to be evenly distributed if the contest is fair, so hard work is what makes the difference); creativity is all right--up to a point (though in the class where I viewed the program, pupils did not find the imagery of the bird very convincing); no thought is given to cooperating or sharing ideas if the competition is an individual one ("teamwork" lessons are not mistakenly applied here); and in the final moment, you are strictly "on your own." Lots of grist for the cultural anthropologist's mill here. Perhaps there are not so many ways to go, after all!

C. The Press of Time

The preoccupation with time was so apparent during my year's observations that although "time" is properly a category in cultural analysis, I want to call special attention to it here.

These are some of the ways that the idea that "time is of the essence" were reflected in ThinkAbout:

1. Content: A teacher commending the series pointed to its up-to-date qualities--no old cars, no out-of-style clothes. A spokesman noted that the series was not only up-to-date (male telephone operators) but even a bit ahead of its time (woman copilot on a commercial airline).

2. Time as a story theme: Many programs stressed the importance of time, of being on time, of meeting deadlines. There was, however, no time for contemplation in ThinkAbout's 12½ action-packed minutes.

3. Scheduling: One of the ways that the magnitude of the series was stressed was by the number of programs produced times the length of each (rather than, say, the amount of money spent, the number of people involved). In ITV tradition, the broadcasts were each shown twice, providing some competition with the teacher's own schedule.

4. The "urgency" surrounding the first year: Everybody was in a rush--a series was aired before production was finished and before a complete guide could be printed; state and county media people rushed to find classrooms to serve as "experimental" and "control" groups; and the haste raised eyebrows as people removed from the center of activity wondered what all the commotion was about.

   But people in the know talked in terms that could be translated as the "shelf life" of any series: How long before no one is using it at all? Five years? Seven? Ten?

   Research, too, had to be fired up quickly--we were poised as the series began. But if the series will be available on videotape as well as on open broadcast, then year one may not have been as opportune a time for the assessment as will other years when the series is available in the package form teachers claim they prefer.

5. Teacher resistance--some time problems of their own: Teachers expressed numerous concerns of their own--their busy schedules, the amount of time one "might" spend following up on all the activities, the mounting pressure as the year went on. As one school media specialist noted: "Teachers are going crazy trying to keep up with everything they have to do."

Start-up decisions are, apparently, left to consortium members. For the ThinkAbout start-up, our state media specialist had opted to have this state participate in the first possible year for viewing, thus capturing a year of "shelf life" rather than waiting another year and cutting down on the usable time of the series. But this year's rush and frustrations had caused him to rethink that sense of urgency:

> If I were to do it over, this first year I'd do nothing but in-services and start the series next year. The next time that something is being produced during the year it is supposed to be broadcast, I think we'll forgo one year of the life of the series in order to do a good job in in-servicing and to cut out all the technical problems.

D. The Status of Instructional Television

I think there is an intriguing issue in the status accorded to all instructional media in schools, to the relative statuses among them, and to the status that instructional television is achieving among the media. The best words I have for introducing the topic were spoken by "Ralph," the fifth grade pupil we all took note of during a classroom visit of the case study team in December 1979 in Portland: "It's just television--it's an interesting way to get out of work in the afternoon."

My impression is that television is considered to be in the category with all other classroom media; however, within that media group it may be jockeying with classroom films for first- and second-place favorites, well ahead of such old standbys as filmstrips, records, and the overhead projector. That jockeying should be of interest to AIT, and I imagine the Agency finds satisfaction

in the opinion so frequently expressed by most media specialists that videotape is the "coming thing." Apparently, the shift-over has been slow in starting but is predicted to take over rapidly from this point.

That transformation from film to videotape appears to be occurring for some wrong reasons as well as some right ones. Both cost and convenience are prime factors, though neither is immediately related to curricular merit. Enthusiasts take the position that quality will rise with quantity and add that the eventual use of videodisc will result in incredible savings when instructional television reaches that stage.

Though any major shift in educational technology is interesting to watch, to me the bigger question is also the more interesting: What is the general status of media use in classrooms? My guess is that it is not high. Prevailing opinion continues to be that a teacher can use too much media but never too little. Teachers who do not use media are subjected to no chiding and are certainly not "suspect" for being lazy or unprepared. Yet we heard the Portland teacher tell us how her colleagues joke with her when she goes to get the television set in preparation for the afternoon broadcast of ThinkAbout: "Now the kids can watch their soap opera." In one school that had regular use of a video recorder, that machine was used not only to record ThinkAbout but also to record cartoons that the teachers used for noontime classroom showing on rainy days. Children's television never gets too far from the image we all have of Saturday morning television fare.

An event that occurred independently in at least two schools

provides an illustration of what I mean by the "status" of television in the hierarchy of school concerns. In both schools a teacher heard about ThinkAbout from a media specialist who had in turn heard about the series from the media person at the county office. But the county specialist was intent on finding classrooms to participate in the testing study being conducted by the Evaluation Center. Because of the testing, the question of school participation was taken out of the hands of the media person and assigned to the counselor instead. The testing aspect of ThinkAbout raised it to a higher level of authority in the school program. (One counselor was swayed by the presentation and recommended participation; the other convinced the principal that too much valuable classroom time would be taken.) Assuming that the Agency for Instructional Television would like to lend whatever help it can to improving the status of instructional television, it may be that the subtle shift from media specialist to counselor "turf" within a school provides a remarkable clue. Might television's status be improved by linking it more closely with testing outcomes than with resource inputs? What if the promotion of ThinkAbout had been managed through the use of a diagnostic test that teachers could use with their classrooms to test problem-solving capabilities (instead of promoting the series by distributing the preliminary teacher's guide)? At present, tests not only measure pupil performance, they serve the far more critical function of validating particular aspects of the course of study. I am dismayed by so narrow a way of interpreting what education is all about, but if that is how classroom teachers decide what is

important, then AIT needs to consider how to make the appropriate link between its products and the kinds of explicit results teachers feel they must obtain. Neither the testing study conducted by the Evaluation Center this year nor the kind of skill summary at the back of the teacher's guide goes far enough, but they seem like steps in the (unfortunate but seemingly necessary) direction of demonstrating precisely what testable skills are taught.

Another fact of status seeking for instructional television might be the self-conscious effort to identify and consistently use some term that refers specifically to television programs prepared for instructional purposes. There seem to be myriad terms that inadvertently stress the entertainment value of television:

the cassette	the tape
the film	the tube
the movie	the TV
the show	the video.

Two more accurate phrases are cumbersome to use, and they raise some question in my mind why we need both phrases:

educational television
instructional television.

Of all the phrases heard during the past year, the term "video" seems short, accurate, and at least not yet hopelessly linked with what was sometimes referred to as "real TV." I notice that the ThinkAbout teacher's guide was subtitled "a video series," and perhaps that represents a conscious effort at AIT to standardize terminology. That term also suggests to me a recognition that it is the videotape feature, more than television broadcasting, that

represents the important direction for instructional television.

E. Instructional Television: More Television Than Instructional?

Strictly esoteric, this topic was suggested by my reading of an article by Neil Postman in the November 1979 Kappan taken from his 1979 publication, Teaching as a conserving activity. Postman describes what he calls "the TV curriculum" and contrasts it with the instructional processes of the school. Television as he refers to it means the at-home viewing of students. The question his article raised for me is: Among paired sets of contrasts between television and the school, where does the phenomenon called "instructional television" fall? Does ITV display more characteristics of "real television" or of the classroom teacher? My impression is that the ThinkAbout series displays more features in common with television than with classroom instruction. Postman's article invites what I think could be an instructive comparison and analysis.

F. Some Things To ThinkAbout

This closing section gives me an opportunity to review or make explicit some of the suggestions and ideas I have made in this report. They should, of course, be regarded only as food for thought. They are recommendations made as a result of my observations this year and my experience as a teacher and an observer, but that does not elevate the ideas to the status of "findings" or "conclusions."

1. Real-life context. I liked the idea that ThinkAbout would bring "real-life" situations into the classroom. I wish it

had done that to an even greater extent. My impression was that the programs were centered about school life, or ended up with a school like approach (in which going to the library invariably proves a good way to find things out) even more than necessary. But I would encourage the producers to stay close to the everyday experiences of kids. Program 4, "You Can Remember," seemed to strike a responsive chord--learning a paper route. I did not meet students whose lives ordinarily include making home movies, going to camp via airplane, or planning cities of the future.

2. Link up with measurable skills. If current educator practice is to validate instructional programs in terms of measurable and measured skill performance, then AIT should pay attention to how it might validate its programs through tests. Even if AIT is trying to break that narrow perception of schooling (a courageous and unlikely strategy for a public agency, but the problem-solving focus of the series could cause one to hope), the best way to achieve it is probably through having some demonstrable and measurable set of skills apparent in the series and then insuring that the series accomplishes not only those skills but other desirable outcomes as well.

3. Recognize that in school pupils are now producers as well as consumers of television. I wondered if there was a missed opportunity in not taking viewers "behind the scenes" in producing ThinkAbout or in using the problems of actually televising activities as a vehicle for problem-solving activity. I have the impression that there is quite a bit of televising of in-school activities and that the fifth and sixth grade pupils are learning how to do

this. In one school, the media specialist had "trained" three teams of pupils to assist teachers that wanted activities put on tape for later class use (e.g., a dress rehearsal, a class discussion session, a series of social studies reports). Why not involve children more with the real problems of television production? For example, why not include a program about the decisions involved in making another program that is in the same series?

4. Help viewers keep track of where they are in the series. I think teachers and pupils alike would have benefitted by some "prompts" built right into the sequence to help them keep track of where they were in the series (if the integrity of the series is important, which it may not be) or at least to emphasize the point of each particular program. I must repeat that not all teachers had the guide, and not all teachers who had the guide made very much use of it. Perhaps one or two attention-getting questions at the beginning of each program would help. Purportedly, placing them there would be to help pupils get the most out of the programs, but my guess is that they would help teachers too. I think the intent of the program as the producers saw it should be quite explicit; individual teachers can make their own decision as to whether the producer's point is the one they want to stress in their classroom.

5. Make every effort to learn more about the kind of help that teacher-users of a series like ThinkAbout want, and then make sure that they get the help they need. Although I noted that the series seemed unnecessarily "schooly," I think that programs might have included sessions with teachers and pupils discussing ThinkAbout.

Such programs might help teachers see how better to lead discussions, keep certain pupils from dominating, nurture good ideas, foster a more interactive discussion style, and so forth. If I were to "retouch" the series, I would seriously consider throwing out most of the Challenge programs and replacing them with programs that showed "real" teachers and their classes working through some problem from the previous cluster or attempting to relate the series to some new classroom problem.

Since teachers so often turned the problem-solving lessons of ThinkAbout to solving behavior lessons of their pupils--whispering, behaving badly in the cafeteria or on the playgroumd, acting up when a special or substitute teacher was in charge--why not give teachers some models of good teaching, using ThinkAbout processes in those cases? One might have thought that the producers of ThinkAbout invented brainstorming and blockbusting, the topics of Programs 2 and 3, the way teachers subsequently referred to the usefulness they found in those particular programs and approaches. That suggests to me the kind of help teachers are looking for. What better way to serve the nation's schools than to provide teachers with the help they need?

PART II: CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY 1:

THINKABOUT IN MARTHA WISE'S FIFTH AND SIXTH GRADE CLASS FOR "TALENTED AND GIFTED" PUPILS

Although built more than 15 years ago, Ridge Elementary School is still one of the "newer," and certainly one of the most striking, schools of a large school district of about 18,000 students and 46 schools. The school was built during the era when "open classrooms" were the rage, and its large circular cluster units dominate the architecture. Within each cluster unit, sliding doors can be closed to create a series of self-contained classrooms or opened in a moment to put all the teachers and pupils in touch with one another. The clusters provide for a rather natural division of the school population into three major units, one for the first and second grades, one for grades 3 and 4, and one for grades 5 and 6.

Ridge School serves a dual population, including both longtime residents who have watched the city creep up and slowly engulf them and the recent arrivals attracted to the space and heights of hills at the edge of town. The latter group includes parents whose "upward mobility" is social as well as geographical and who are deeply interested in and concerned about the schooling received by their children. Thus it is not surprising that Ridge School would be selected among the first to offer one of the new TAG (Talented and Gifted) programs being tried out in the district.

Martha ("Marty") Wise had come to Ridge School expressly to run the new program, though she had previously taught in the district for

several years. Her teaching responsibilities also included providing assistance with reading instruction in all the classrooms of the school, but her special program and her "teaching space" were in the talented and gifted class.

The cluster architecture of the school could not accommodate the kind of program Marty was running, and so she was housed in a separate and "temporary" building consisting only of her one classroom. The room was about half again as large as most classrooms. Upon entering, one got the impression of four subdivisions within it: a low worktable and work area near the door; another area dominated by the teacher's desk and resource materials; a large area usually arranged in a discussion circle open at one end to give the teacher access to the chalkboard; and a fourth corner with extra work areas, some audiovisual equipment, and a large old television set sitting high in the corner of the room.

Pupils and furniture alike in the TAG classroom appeared in a constant state of flux. If students were working at individual tasks they might be spread out all over the room at individual desks, at tables, or seated and working right on the carpeted floor. For discussions, a central activity of the program, students pulled chairs into the discussion area, so that the "circle" always consisted of just as many "desks" (the chairs had desk fronts attached and were of various heights) as there were pupils present at the time. It was not unusual for Marty to be hosting visitors when she was meeting her TAG classes, generally teachers from other schools in the district who were interested in her approach or in the program itself. Visitors often sat at student desks in the "circle" and were invited to participate

in discussion or activities.

Upon observing Marty one had the impression of a quiet, confident, soft-spoken, young-but-experienced teacher at work. The TAG class was handpicked (through a screening process that included achievement test scores, IQ scores, a teacher checklist, and teacher and parent recommendations), and pupils seemed to recognize that it was a privilege to be in it. I never witnessed the hint of a discipline problem other than perhaps some excessive excitement when the children were working in small groups.

The TAG group met only once a week, initially for only two hours, from 12:20 until the bus departure at 2:30. Later in the year the schedule was changed and the class met at 12:05. Although that added only 15 minutes to the schedule, it represented a substantial increase in the proportion of time. Students also worked in their regular classrooms and at home on independent projects that were an integral part of the TAG program, so their involvement in the program and opportunity to interact with their special teacher were not as circumscribed as the schedule may suggest.

However, the cluster design of the school and the scheduling of the upper grade TAG class (there was a similar once-a-week session for pupils of grades 1, 2, and 3 identified as talented and gifted) were not completely compatible. Ten fifth and sixth grade gifted pupils who stayed with the class for the entire afternoon session were joined for the first segment (i.e., until 1:30) by a like number of fourth graders. At 1:30 the fourth graders left to join their classmates at recess, and at 1:45 they returned with them to their regular classrooms. Because of the cluster arrangement that paired

the third and fourth grade pupils, the fourth graders did not otherwise associate with the fifth and sixth graders in the special class. Being visibly smaller and less mature, they tended to choose only other fourth graders for any project assignments that required pairing off.

From every point of view--teacher, pupil, and observer--the program for the upper grade TAG pupils seems rather fractured, but in fact it produced no visible confusion or distress. Pupils' school days are composed of bits and pieces of schedules, and Ridge School was not so large that pupils could get lost in it, either figuratively or literally.

Marty's program for the upper grade TAG pupils began with activities suitable for all 20 pupils from grades 4, 5, and 6. The class always convened in the discussion circle and often remained there for the entire first half of the afternoon, although that period itself was divided into a variety of activities, including such things as a teacher-read story (e.g., Stories with Holes that require listeners to figure out what unexplained event in a sequence had to have happened for the story to end as it did), a teacher-initiated activity such as writing an end to a story or working solutions to a set of puzzles, and a final sharing of individual solutions or discussion of processes.

For all the problems that seemed to beleaguer other teachers regarding ThinkAbout's broadcast schedule or mixed-up sequence, virtually everything about the series worked out "just right" for Marty. Since the class met only once a week, there was no possible way for them to view more than one program, but Marty noted optimistically that the programs were self-contained (what Postman refers to as

"discontinuous in context") so that students never felt they had "missed out." Had the class met on Wednesday they would simply have seen the "other half" of the series; had it met any other day of the week, of course, they could not have used it at all. Marty's one wish, expressed time and time again, was that the series would be available in videotape so that in the future she can show the programs she wants, when she wants them.

Marty's classroom, a recent and temporary addition to Ridge School, happened to be the only classroom at the school that was not wired for cable television reception. (Ironically, she reported that she believed she was the only teacher at the school using television this year!) Undaunted, she relied on "rabbit-ears" reception and did the best she could with an old black-and-white television set. The rigidly fixed time of the Monday afternoon broadcast became no obstacle; she simply arranged her schedule around it. After more than an hour of teacher-directed and highly verbal activities, the 1:30 broadcast of ThinkAbout provided a perfect time for another change of pace. With a brief glance at the teacher's guide and something of a guess about which program would "probably" be shown, she would announce the likely topic and then have the children move their chairs to another corner of the room while she turned on and tuned the television set; if she had concluded activities a few moments earlier (as she tried to do), there was also time for any last-minute reminders to the fourth graders and an opportunity for pupils to get a drink (drinking fountain inside the classroom) or be excused for a quick trip to the toilet.

At 1:30, as ThinkAbout came on the television, the fourth graders

were officially through with their participation in the special class. At that point they had the option of joining the "regular" third and fourth grade classes for recess or remaining in the TAG classroom and watching television. What the teacher seemed to have conveyed to them in that sense of option was that they were welcome to watch ThinkAbout but it was really part of the fifth and sixth graders' activities, not their own. (Since this was the school district described earlier in which the decision had been made to use ThinkAbout at fifth grade, possibly the teacher felt that she should "save" the program for that year, although she mentioned nothing in that regard.) In any case, the fourth graders usually left the classroom when ThinkAbout started, especially on days when it was not raining and children could spend their recess outside. Sometimes one or two fourth graders would remain during part of the program while they finished an assignment. I assumed that they were following the television story as they completed their written work, since they invariably glanced up from time to time, particularly when the setting of the story changed or something dramatic happened. Nevertheless, when their assignments were completed they most often turned them in on the teacher's desk and immediately left the room rather than return to watch the duration of the ThinkAbout program as I expected them to do.

Since Marty's class could only view one out of every two programs anyway, it did not matter a great deal whether the programs were in sequence, though all teachers--including Marty--felt they should know which program they were about to view. I could not figure out why Marty seemed to be so incredibly lucky in "guessing" which program would be shown and why she had not been plagued by the

repeat broadcasts that bothered other teachers. When I plotted the actual sequence being telecast, I discovered that the mix-ups almost always occurred on Wednesdays, regardless of whether they were a skip in the sequence or a repeat broadcast. The only day that Marty "guessed wrong" was on a Monday when she was away at a week-long conference held for teachers of gifted studeuts. She had to prepare advance plans for the substitute teacher. The substitute teacher left her a note informing her which program was actually shown, and so the next time Marty viewed the program she was back on schedule again. She did not experience a program mix-up until February; naturally enough, she took it quite in stride.

ThinkAbout's 1:30 telecast provided a perfect halfway point in the afternoon for the fifth and sixth graders and a potential stimulus for a new lesson. I think that Marty usually headed into that final 40-minute period with a tentative plan to: 1) discuss the ThinkAbout program awhile, 2) tie it in with other classroom activities related to the problem-solving process, and then 3) either turn the attention of the "class" (recall that after the fourth graders departed there were only 10 pupils remaining) briefly to a new topic or let them work individually on their independent projects. I wondered whether my presence as a visitor who was particularly interested in how teachers were actually using ThinkAbout in their classrooms, and my simultaneous tape-recording and note taking during those discussions, served as impetus for Marty to extend the follow-up discussions of ThinkAbout and to make a very self-conscious effort to relate them to her long-term curricular objective in fostering creative problem solving. Discussion occasionally continued for half an hour or more, leaving

time only for a few hurried reminders after the official all-school announcement over the intercom, "The busses are here." On several occasions the ThinkAbout program and the discussion prompted a new assignment of something pupils were to do or to watch for in the next few days or weeks.

When I asked point-blank whether my visits resulted in her paying more attention to ThinkAbout, Marty said that the length of the follow-up discussion had far more to do with the topic than it did with my presence:

> I would say that today's discussion was fairly similar in length to what we have done before. Usually we just go until it comes to some sort of logical conclusion. Maybe today was five minutes longer.
>
> The only difference might be that today there was a lot more focus on process than there is some days. I think that may just be a factor of what the program was about. Other times, when there have been more affective things going on, we've spent more time talking about personal feelings and that sort of thing. We were touching on that a bit today when we talked about our own personal problem-solving style. Other times we've gotten more into relating our own experiences and our own feelings to what has happened. (Abridged from taped interview, December 1979)

My visits to Marty's classroom were my first opportunity to observe one of the new talented and gifted programs. It seemed to me that running such a program might provide a considerable drain on teacher resources in finding new and challenging tasks and problems, and that teachers like Marty might see ThinkAbout as a sort of godsend. But that was not Marty's view. As a matter of fact, she said that the longer she worked with this kind of program, the more she found to do with the pupils. "I don't have the problem of

needing more material," she told me in our first meeting, and I came to realize that she was bubbling over with ideas of things she wanted to explore with the class.

The attraction of ThinkAbout in her program was twofold, first as a skill-type focus, second as a personal-development one.

In terms of skills, as Marty pointed out, classroom teachers are already doing a lot with differentiated curriculum to insure that all pupils are working at optimum levels and are acquiring the skills they need. The complementary part of her teaching role at Ridge School was as a reading specialist, and that assignment entailed an accelerated reading program for many children in the school, not only the handful identified for the TAG program. As Marty noted, in the special TAG program her purpose was "not so much on strictly mathematics or reading or language arts as on thinking skills: learning how to think." Here she elaborates a bit on the curriculum:

> The curriculum in our program is pretty much self-determined. This is only the second year of the program in this district, and in a gifted program it's almost given that the curriculum is not going to be prescribed. We do have some overall guidelines. What we have here are a series of program goals that revolve around the idea of either enriched or accelerated curriculum and higher-level thinking skills.

The other attraction of ThinkAbout for her was the opportunity it provided in a counseling function, a function that she saw as integral to working with the pupils in her class and one of the objectives she felt was apparent in the ThinkAbout series itself:

> As much as anything, I'm using ThinkAbout to generate some counseling activities which basically consist of having the kids share their thoughts and their feelings. One of the problems with gifted students often is a sense of isolation, of feeling different. The program

> provides a focal point for them to start talking to each other and getting some of those feelings out. I'm finding it really useful in that respect.

Although the counseling function held a priority among her own objectives in using ThinkAbout, my notes and tapes of discussions immediately following the programs show Marty drawing the attention of class members to skills and to a very self-conscious examination of problem-solving sequences and alternatives. Her human-relations and communications objectives were worked in rather unobtrusively or at least analytically as she commended pupils for attending to what their peers said, encouraged them to build upon or expand ideas previously suggested in discussion, or asked pupils to identify how their own behavior in turn encouraged or discouraged others. For a couple of weeks the class kept track of "killer phrases" that they themselves used or heard others use that tended to stifle conversation and "put down" the speaker.

Marty's low-keyed and soft-spoken manner created the impression of a conversation in which everyone was contributing about equally. Replay of the tapes suggested instead that, as in most classrooms, Marty was doing most of the talking, and the students were mostly listening. At the same time, her students were virtually assured opportunities to speak, for it was customary to take any major idea or question "around the circle" and let each child comment or react: "OK, is that it now? Has everybody had a turn?" In the intentionally "accepting" atmosphere that Marty created in the classroom, her pupils proved to be as verbal as they were alert. Marty also showed herself to be a remarkably attentive listener when children were talking, not given to a teacher tendency to override or interrupt.

Although the practice gave her an "extra turn" because she both asked questions and answered them, I think the children appreciated her willingness to share her own opinions, wishes, experiences, or annoyances about the same topics on which she invited their thoughts.

Once the program had started and Marty could be sure which one it was, she usually gave the teacher's guide a quick perusal. She occasionally referred to it again at the beginning of the discussion if she had found some guiding questions that she felt would be helpful, but more often she shifted into a pattern that she followed in virtually every discussion sequence:

1. Invite pupil reaction. The function of this opening ritual seemed mostly to be to get pupils talking and allow them to express any strong feelings. Unlike statements they would offer as the discussion took more focus, student opinions at this point were accepted at face value without elaboration or probing.

2. Teacher identification of the topic for discussion. Marty found ThinkAbout quite on target for the skills she was trying to develop among her pupils, so she tended to reinforce the explicit point of the programs (as stated in the guide) or to show how the program dealt in a new way with or used a new terminology to discuss problems that the class had previously confronted. For example, in the following comment she begins by signaling the end of the "reaction" segment, ties back in to earlier discussions, and then "sets" the course of the discussion by pulling in a new term introduced in ThinkAbout Program 35, the first program in the cluster on criteria:

> OK. One of the topics that we've talked a lot about this year, whether it has been conscious [explicit] or not, has been evaluation. How do you evaluate something? How do you make a

> decision? How do you decide whether you are going to do something? You need to have some criteria.

3. Teacher illustrations of the point. Here she emphasizes and repeats the theme, providing additional examples or questions of what she means.

4. Relating to pupil experience. Next she calls on pupils who can think of relevant experiences of their own.

5. Sifting. Here is the point at which lessons can go adrift. Marty seems not to lose track of where she wants the lesson to go, though she cannot know in advance whether each new contribution will be "on course." Her procedure seems to be to sift through the responses as they are volunteered. After each pupil speaks she may reaffirm the point, translate or reinterpret the message so that her point is not lost, or simply call on another volunteer.

6. Summarize. As each pupil speaks or after all the volunteers have had their say, she may refine the question, redirect the discussion, or recapitulate and summarize.

7. Juncture. At the end of the sequence, she either concludes, expands the topic, or extends the scope of the lesson to some new or continuing activity. At the end of a rather general discussion about criteria, for example, she suddenly seemed to leave that topic and return to an activity begun the week before, an assignment for every class member to learn a new skill or develop increasing competency in a skill already learned. She asked, "Who would like some help?" and turned the efforts of the entire group to helping those students who had problems. A student who had set the goal of learning how to do calligraphy explained her problem of identifying someone to teach

her. The teacher suggested that the pupils "brainstorm" a number of possible solutions. ("Brainstorming" was already one of Marty's classroom discussion techniques; she happened not to see the ThinkAbout program that used it. She also liked "boundary breaking" as a related technique.) After they proposed some ideas, the teacher suddenly directed the discussion right back on target by suggesting that the class would now "need some criteria" so that they could evaluate the merits of the different solutions that had been proposed. Later she was able to conclude the formal lesson with the very conclusion toward which she had been leading the discussion: "You see how really helpful weighing criteria can be."

Too Good To Be True?

In light of the wish of the producers of ThinkAbout to learn how the program was used in its first year, the account of ThinkAbout in Marty Wise's fifth and sixth grade special class might seem almost too good to be true. In spite of the small class size (10 pupils--when all were present) and the fact that the class could see at most only half the programs, here was a class of bright pupils working with an exceptionally able teacher and addressed to the very set of skills that comprised the series. A seemingly perfect match.

Did she plan on continuing to use the series all year? I asked Marty in December.

> As far as I know, I will. As long as the schedule stays the same. And as long as ThinkAbout isn't superseded by something else. For example, the testing that I have been doing. I really wanted to do that, and it's an important part of our curriculum. . . . But I really do see ThinkAbout providing an opportunity for these kids to interact in a way that they probably cannot otherwise interact.

As it actually turned out, I rather doubt if Marty's class saw as many as 10 programs during the first year of ThinkAbout. The height of class activities relating to problem-solving skills per se happened to come at about the time I proposed making my visits, and so, for a while, ThinkAbout took center stage for that precious one hour a week when the teacher worked with only the fifth and sixth graders in the special program. "ad I continued to be a regular visitor, perhaps the class would have continued to watch the program, but that would have introduced the complication of "observer effect." Instead, and in my absence, even the newness of ThinkAbout could not keep it in its first-place position among the classroom priorities. There were too many equally attractive alternatives from which to choose.

My last classroom visit was in February. On that day the ThinkAbout discussion was compressed into three minutes so that the class could complete some presentations about an in-class project. Even in February the competition for classroom minutes was increasing. When I telephoned two months later to arrange a final visit to coincide with the end of the series, Marty said that she was no longer having the class watch the program. She explained that after the week-long spring break she realized that there were many things she wanted to accomplish before the end of the school year. Since my first visit the class had viewed programs only "sporadically" and without her prior preparation or any follow-up activities. In the last few weeks they had seen no programs. (It should be noted that the last two program clusters pertained to communication and to problem solving, two skill areas Marty earlier identified as critical

ones for her students.)

It was my contact with Marty that led me to identify what I have here termed the "casual users" of ThinkAbout. Her outspoken enthusiasm about the program, which she described as her "first us of television on any regular basis," has to be weighed against the limited use she actually made of it, in part a function of her limited time with the TAG pupils, in part a function of a similar enthusiasm she expressed for a number of alternatives to the program--including a "newer" television series, 3-2-1 Contact, which she thought her class "might want to see."

A close examination suggests that the same "press for time" that ultimately squeezed ThinkAbout out of her classroom activities was evident even early in the year. I originally contacted Marty in the first week of November. She immediately extended an open invitation to come watch ThinkAbout with the class "any time" and to talk with her afterward about it. But pinning her down to an exact date proved a bit difficult. Though the class had seen one or two programs in October, they did not view their next program until December 3. Two Mondays in November were given over to the district-wide testing program being conducted in the TAG classes; one Monday dismissal was early (1:00 p.m.) to accommodate after-school conferences with parents (another district-wide policy); the fourth Monday was a school holiday. Her own participation in a week-long conference for teachers meant that Marty met her TAG class only three Mondays in January. By early February, pressure was mounting between the number of things she wanted to accomplish and the limited time available. Viewing became only "sporadic."

As Marty sees it, having the entire series available on videotape would allow her to show the programs she wanted when she wanted them. If she does actually have the entire series available to her next year in videotape, how much use will she actually make of them? I doubt that even Marty herself could say for sure.

CASE STUDY 2:

THINKABOUT IN GEORGE WALKER'S SIXTH GRADE SELF-CONTAINED CLASSROOM

Twenty-two years have passed since I taught a sixth grade class; yet when I made my first visit to George Walker's sixth grade class, I had the feeling that things have not changed much and I could have "taken over" at a moment's notice. I felt completely at home in the class and relatively unobtrusive, even on days when my visits included only the part of the afternoon during and immediately after the Think-About program. My first school visit was in mid-November 1979; my last taped interview with George was made after the close of school in June 1980.

The text materials the sixth graders were using had changed somewhat, though not necessarily improved, and a newly adopted social studies text on Latin America looked so familiar that I had to check the date of publication to see if perchance it was the very book I had used. George was teaching the same folk dances I had taught (from what sounded like the same recording) and had even chosen some of the same stories to read to the class. (He was unfamiliar with one of my old favorites, And now Miguel; when I mentioned it he quickly located it in the school library and began reading it to the class.)

We bore some other similarities as well. I was about George's age when I taught my class. I don't remember having a beard then—but that was because the superintendent of schools told me when I got the job (it too was a small town, with a few large schools within the city limits and a number of old rural schools spread out over a huge outlying community) that he "hoped" I was going to shave the beard before school opened. As was true of my interests in those

days, George enjoys hiking and camping. He manages to weave those interests into his classroom program through a curriculum in outdoor education that includes a one-week experience at camp for sixth graders during the regular school year.

Even the composition of our classes was similar. Didn't I have one boy of "slightly dark complexion" and one girl of Oriental background (my pupil was Japanese-American; George's pupil had been born in Hong Kong)? Didn't I have a class of about 25 pupils, with just a few more boys than girls (George had 11 girls, 14 boys)? There may have been fewer pupils from blue-collar homes in my class, but both classes had children whose fathers were doctors, and apparently each of us had a pupil who was related to a school board member. It's a small world.

Under current operating definitions both our classes were "self-contained," though in retrospect I would say that my class was "more" self-contained than George's. My class went to other teachers as a class for shop and for art but otherwise were with me all day, every day. George's class was instructed in music (by the high school music teacher), in interpersonal skills (by the counselor), and, in the school library, in library skills. In addition, pupils came and went throughout the day to a series of special programs (math, reading, counseling); three boys consistently missed the ThinkAbout program each Monday and Wednesday afternoon because of a special remedial math lab (though they often returned just in time to do a follow-up activity or written assignment).

George also had available to him one hour of assistance each day from a classroom aide. Rather expectedly, he chose to have that

help during reading, the second major period in each morning's regular activities. The aide usually came to the classroom and assisted one of the three reading groups by hearing them read orally, presenting new vocabulary, or helping them check or correct a reading assignment. If there was a backlog of papers to correct, George might also ask her to spend her time correcting papers and recording grades.

Somewhat to his surprise, after teaching at Washington Elementary School for only six years, George found himself the "senior" teacher on the faculty. The principal and media-specialist-cum-librarian had been at the school for years, and some teachers had taught in other schools in the district, but George had been at Washington the longest of any teacher and was beginning to enjoy a security born of longevity.

There were three teachers at each grade level, grades 1 through 6, and George was friendly with and helpful to the female teachers who taught the other two sixth grade classes. The three of them cooperated on organizational matters more than on curricular ones. Although they occasionally shared texts and worksheets for their instructional programs, their more typical interactions revolved around music or dance programs, cafeteria and playground deportment, or plans for the week of outdoor education in which all three classrooms and teachers were involved. The sixth grade teacher in the next classroom had not heard about ThinkAbout and did not realize that George was using it with his classroom. I noticed that she was a frequent user of films and filmstrips; she said she had never used instructional television.

George's classroom seemed of standard width but exceptional

length, allowing space for a large old sofa and easy chair and creating a constant challenge to him to rearrange the seating pattern of the individual desks and chairs.

The most customary seating arrangement was some variation on a U-shape, open toward the chalkboard at the front of the classroom. When the room was so arranged, the children were often allowed to sit on a large rug George had put in the center of the room while they listened to a story or watched a film, filmstrip, or television. On one occasion when George's class watched ThinkAbout with a fifth grade class as guests in that classroom, I noticed that strict attention was paid to having pupils sit rather than lie on the carpet. Protocol was relaxed in their own classroom, and the children usually sprawled on the carpet in what I assumed must be a "living sociogram" of the interpersonal dynamics of the class. (At sixth grade, of course, the proximity was boy-to-boy, girl-to-girl; although by the end of the term there were some budding romances, the two sexes kept their distance.)

In the spring George succeeded in making a new seating arrangement that he had wanted to try all year, setting up individual carrels around two walls of the room, each carrel separated from the two adjacent ones by cardboard that extended about four feet off the floor. Although George did not seem to mind quiet talking, he did get upset when the noise level of the class got very high, so the carrels, with their visible reminder of solitude, nicely augmented his efforts to have at least some periods during the day when the classroom was completely quiet. Had I been blindfolded the first time I visited the class after the carrels were put up, I think I might not have

realised that the students were in the classroom.

Three idiosyncrasies that I observed give some hint of George's style with the class:

1. His red kitchen stool, a perch from which he always read the after-lunch story and usually conducted classroom discussions. George used the stool the way some teachers use the corners of their desks, to sit in a slightly higher and more commanding position. He often relocated his own desk in the classroom, however, and it was as often at the back of the room or amongst the student's desks as it was at the front of the class. The red stool solved the problem of having a place to sit regardless of the furniture arrangement.

2. His considerable use of the overhead projector. More than any teacher I can remember, George used the overhead projector as an instructional aid for introducing words, giving assignments, drawing diagrams (or projecting diagrams already drawn), or keeping track of points made in discussion. The overhead projector was always at the ready at the front of the classroom, and if the class was not already at work when it was switched on, it gave a signal that they soon would be. Classroom windows did not extend the full length of the long classroom, and even on the brightest days the front of the classroom was sufficiently dark that the overhead projector, film, or television was easily seen without the necessity of closing any blinds. A screen for the overhead projector was mounted permanently in place above the chalkboard, and the projector itself was on a mobile cart that could be quickly swung into position directly under it.

3. His use of a number of abbreviated commands and classroom rituals for handling organisational routines. Numerous teachers use

variations on a point system--more often noting negative than positive points--but I have never seen a teacher keep track of points on his sleeve. When particular students seemed to be having particularly bad days (invariably the same students, invariably boys), George would put a piece of masking tape on his sleeve and keep track of points that could lead to having to spend time after school. Recording of points was public: "OK, Randy, that's two!"

Another set of rituals were those in which the entire class participated in unison in acknowledgment of some individual's announcement or action. For example, announcements made by pupils from other classes (e.g., "Our class is having a cupcake sale on Friday so be sure to bring your money") were acknowledged by a single clap of the hands given in unison by all members of the class at the direction of the teacher, "Let's give them a hand."

My request to have all the pupils write something about how their home viewing and school viewing of television were alike and different inadvertently produced a classroom hassle when George assigned it (on a day subsequent to one of my visits) that precipitated an extra penalty assignment of arithmetic homework. By my next visit all was forgiven, and students were even pressing me to learn whether some of their papers were going to be "sent to Michigan," but George felt that my having caused the whole commotion in the first place should not go unrecognized. I got the "watermelon treatment," a ritual that I assume is usually restricted to insiders. Each pupil takes an imaginary slice of watermelon and makes a big show of devouring it in one giant sweep from left to right. And the seeds? They were directed at me, in what became one loud Bronx cheer. But--and

this is important--that was the end of it! Annoyance voiced, issue closed.

The watermelon treatment probably portrays George's style with the class rather well--a sense of humor, rather tight but not intrusive control, a teacher-directed class, with room for "kids to be kids." I felt that George had quite adequate control over the class in spite of their obvious high energy and that he enjoyed them. As he noted during the year, he "probably had the hardest class" (of the three sixth grades) but they were also "the neatest" (i.e., best). To my surprise, in an interview after the close of school in June he expressed considerable frustration in terms of his impact on the class and stated that "if I had to teach a group of kids like that one, year after year, I just wouldn't stay in teaching." He explained:

> My ability to communicate with them was unsuccessful. I felt at the end of the year they were doing the very things they did at the beginning of the year that I didn't like. I felt that as a teacher I had very little influence--less than in any year I've taught. . . . It sure is nice that it's over.

George's frustration relates to the class as a whole and to their collective impact on him: "They got me upset, got me mad. . . . There were times when I'd shout, 'Shut up! Put your heads down!' That happens every year, but not as often as it did this year." He added, "I've always thought of myself as being lenient and open. But sometimes this year I felt I was just the opposite of what I want to be as a teacher."

Frustrated as he may have been--or was he simply worn out at the end of the school year?--George was not at all gloomy in his assessment of the individual progress made by some of the children. In that regard he felt quite the opposite, that some of his pupils

had made as much progress as he had ever seen, or more. All was not lost; he simply hoped that he won't have "another class like that one."

A Day in Class

Flexibility has been much touted in education in recent years, and the implication has been that new, alternative arrangements to building design or classroom organization were the way to achieve it; my visits to Washington School reminded me of the remarkable flexibility of the self-contained classroom. In George's class one could never be sure exactly what was coming next.

At the same time, there was a very discernible pattern of organization. I think the daily schedule reflected George's (and perhaps most elementary teachers') perception of the ideal classroom day: the morning is for basics, the afternoon is for "other things." Let me describe an actual and rather typical day: February 27, 1980.

School begins at 8:30 a.m. at Washington Elementary School, but so many children arrive earlier by school bus that classes are virtually "in session" by the time the morning bell rings, especially if the weather is cold (by local standards) or rainy. On this morning about half the children remained in the classroom (some working at their desks, some playing the game of Kalaha, two girls practicing a dance the class would be presenting later in the month), while others were in the halls or playing outside in the light rain.

A set of math papers, corrected the evening before, had been distributed to each child's desk. The teacher was busy preparing math problems that could later be flashed on the screen via the overhead projector. Without spoken direction the class quickly settled down after the bell. George gave an opportunity to pupils who wanted

to share news items (on this day it was the results of the New Hampshire primary elections). Again without announcement, George turned on the overhead projector to project five multiplication problems and turned off the classroom lights. Pupils went immediately to work copying and solving the problems. Students then proceeded to work for the next 45 minutes on individual assignments in arithmetic while the teacher (and visitor) answered questions on a request basis. Students who finished their day's assignment in math could go to the back of the room to play Kalaha; by about 9:25 10 children were doing so.

Then it was time for the class's scheduled physical education time in the multipurpose room across the hall. This morning's P.E. period was devoted to practice for a forthcoming dance program to be presented for parents. After about a 20-minute dance period, George dismissed the class by stating the time (10:06) when he expected all pupils to be back at their desks following a brief interval when they could go to the toilet, get a drink, visit, etc.

Pupils, teacher, and teacher's aide converged in the classroom and proceeded immediately to their tasks according to a schedule written on the chalkboard that divided the class into three reading groups and distributed them according to three components of the reading period: "R" (recreational reading), "M" (meet with teacher or aide as a group), "D" (desk work, consisting either of reading a story in a reader or completing an assignment). There were five pupils in the top group ("We're doing seventh grade reading," the only boy in the group informed me) and 10 pupils in each of the other two groups. A boy from the middle group assured me that although the

top group had "the hardest" reading, his group was also doing "advanced" work. He referred to the third group, using a reader entitled Easy going, as "the flunkies." A boy from that group immediately came over to me to ask, "What did he say about us?"

During the one-hour period all children are scheduled into each of the three facets of the reading program. The end of the reading period was signalled by the instruction "Pink sheets," a reminder for everyone to record the number of pages read during the recreation reading time.

"Clear desks" was the next direction, the signal to begin the third and final leg of the morning's instructional journey. On alternate mornings the music teacher visits, so the third "hour" in the morning is somewhat variable. In general, however, it is given over to academic tasks, including the completion of work begun earlier in the morning. As a pupil explained to me, "What we do next depends on what he tells us to do."

On this day the class was directed to return to the five problems in multiplication they had been assigned earlier in the morning. "Now we'll see who is ready for the seventh grade," George chided. He had them pass their papers to be corrected by their classmates. At student direction he completed the problems, working them for all to see on the overhead projector. Scores were then reported orally and recorded.

With about 35 minutes to go before lunch, and with several threats to have students "take out your English books instead," George then divided the class into five teams and had them work together to try to figure out "which number comes next" by discerning

the pattern in a series of numbers. He later said that he'd had this number game ready for several weeks and finally saw just the right opportunity to present it.

Hot lunch was served for the upper grades in the cafeteria/multipurpose room promptly at noon. Because of the rain, pupils returned immediately to the classroom after lunch, playing games under the supervision of a classroom aide to allow teachers their "duty-free" lunch break. After shepherding his own class through the lunch line, then getting and eating his own lunch, and then going to the staff room to make himself a cup of tea, the 40-minute lunch period went by quickly. As we headed back to a classroom of children who had already been confined for four hours (8:30-12:30) and still had three hours to go (12:30-3:30) George made one of the most important comments I recorded during the entire year's research:

> Now comes the part of the day I don't like. The afternoon drags on, and I'm tired. And by evening I am too tired to do a lot of preparation.

The highly structured, basics-oriented, purposive teacher of the morning seemed, by both his perception and mine, to be a different, more casual--but also more uncertain--teacher in the afternoon, a critical point that I want to discuss in more detail. But let me first continue with this detailed account of one particular day in George Walker's class.

The impending dance program was on several teachers' minds. No sooner had George returned to his classroom than he received a message that a teacher in another class "needed some girls" as partners so that her class could practice their dances for the program. Unhesitatingly, George sent off the required number of volunteers;

then he faced the question of what to do with the remainder of the class until the rest returned. (Cagily, no girls volunteered until they had secured his promise that he would not continue with the regular after-lunch reading of a story until they returned.) Deciding to capture the sudden burst of interest he had seen that day in playing Kalaha (before school, during math, and at lunchtime) he proceeded to the chalkboard and, without comment, drew the playoff pattern for a tournament. Then he announced "a big event, the First Annual Kalaha Derby." He quickly had pupils draw starting partners and got the tournament going with the two Kalaha games in the classroom. Amid excitement and laughter the tournament ran quickly but far exceeded the 10-minute maximum he declared at its outset. By about 1:05 the tournament had ended, the girls had returned from their dancing, and he began story time, concluding the short story "The most dangerous game."

I found the duration of story time to be an interesting indicator of the teacher's and class's mood after lunch. Between an occasional impromptu discussion, inspired by events of the morning or during lunchtime, and occasional rapt attention to the story being read, the story-reading period sometimes lasted so long that there was no other formal activity between the end of lunch (12:40) and the beginning of ThinkAbout (1:30). On other days, in other moods, and capped by inattentive listening, the story period might be finished by 12:55. All quite different from the tight, purposeful scheduling of the morning's activities.

On this day story reading lasted till 1:25, in part because George had gotten so far along in the story that he realized he had

to conclude it. After sending a pupil to bring the television set from another classroom, he invited discussion about which of the stories he had recently read was the favorite.

Sensing that the class still had not settled down after the Kalaha tournament and interruption from dancing, George announced that at 1:45 p.m. (i.e., after ThinkAbout) he would need a "noise break," a time of total quiet while pupils worked individually and a way for him to cope with the seemingly boundless energy of the children. Having just committed himself to a noise break, it occurred to him to tie in whatever assignment he would give (at that point he hadn't invented it) with the program the children were about to watch. As he turned on the television, he said, "I don't know what the show will be about today . . . but I'll be giving you an assignment on this program."

The program that came on ThinkAbout (with black-and-white television and rabbit-ears reception--because George's classroom happens to be one in the building that is not hooked up to the cable) was the first program in a new cluster, "Judging Information." George had told me earlier that he hoped the program telecast this day would begin the new cluster rather than go back to a "missed" program on maps and models. But, he added cheerily, "I can do 'models' if that's what they show." When the title of the day's program did prove to be from the new cluster (Program 44, "Should I Believe It?") he gave a sigh of approval and commented to the class, "Ah, this is a good one."

The audience for this day's program consisted of 11 girls, 12 boys, one teacher, and one observer (me). At lunchtime a boy who had been absent during the morning returned to school, so the head count

increased to 24 present of 25 enrolled (by the end of the year the girl who was absent that day had missed 43 days of school). However, promptly at 1:25 on ThinkAbout days three boys left the room for a program of special help in math. The teacher gave a direction to establish which pupils on this particular day could have first choice for place on the carpet (not that there was any shortage of space, only the perennial competition to see who could be first). Pupils ordinarily were free to sit (lie) wherever they wished on the carpet, remain at their desks, or sit in the easy chair or on the sofa. The carpeted area was the favorite of most pupils. They seemed to attend more closely to their proximity to friends than to their proximity to the television. Teacher's guide always in hand, George sat at a student desk at the side of the room. Invariably he would have to adjust picture or sound once or twice during the program.

The story content of Program 44 is summarized in the headline "Aliens Invade." The teacher's guide for the program lists two teaching points: "It is important to question information and its sources" and "When judging the reliability of a source, ask yourself: 'Should I believe it? Who says so? Who else says so?'" The "After the Program" suggestions direct the teacher to "Talk about . . . how to decide if you can believe an information source" and suggest some questions about the story and some ways for students to relate the problem to their own lives.

But George didn't want a "talk-about" activity. He needed a written assignment for pupils to do during the promised noise break. The lesson he made out of the telecast was a lesson on "sequencing." "Sequencing" was one of 24 different follow-up activities listed on

a set of teacher-made wall charts permanently posted high along one wall of the classroom, activities that could be used as "instant assignments" in conjunction with almost any reading done in class. Sequencing was task #17: "Skim your story. Write the events in sequence."

Immediately after ThinkAbout George turned off the television, and a pupil stepped forward to roil the cart into the corridor so the next users of the set would not have to interrupt the class. George rolled the overhead projector into place, switched it on, and began to list the characters in the story: Sue, Eustace, Roto, Nurk, Dr. Davis. "What about Hank?" queried a student. "Who's Hank?" asked the teacher. "The guy's father," came the response. Add Hank to the list. Under these names he added the two headlines from the story, "Aliens Invade" and "Friendly Aliens Scared Away." Then he announced the assignment:

> OK. I need a break. I think this is worth discussing, but I'm going to give you a "put-it-down-on-paper" assignment for 10 minutes and we'll discuss it afterwards. When you get your paper done, just take out your book and read.
>
> Your assignment is activity number 17 [referring to the wall chart of written activities]. Skim the program and write the events in sequence as to what happened.
>
> (He reviews the names of the characters that he has written on the overhead projector and the two headlines.) What you saw on the television program was "Friendly Aliens Scared Away." You saw how Sue formed her information to write her article. What I want you to do is to write down the things that happened in the television show that would go under this headline: "Friendly Aliens Scared Away."
>
> Instead of writing out whole sentences, just write down the events in sequence. What happened?

White paper. Any questions? . . . This is called "10-Minute Noise Break."

The children turned immediately to the written task, taking (their own) paper from their desks. They worked without discussion and without asking the teacher for word help. He stepped into the hall briefly, then returned to the classroom and did some minor straightening-up. The mood was not punitive, it was simply a time for quiet, a teacher "time-out." Except for the sound of the pencil sharpener, no one violated the silence.

Promptly at 2:00 George announced recess. Pupils grabbed jackets and lined up at the classroom door. The playground included a covered "shed" area, so although it was still raining lightly, everyone could go out-of-doors without having to stand in the rain. Most of the girls remained in the shed area with the teacher; most of the boys played a game of four-square outside. This was the regular afternoon recess period for George's class, but he had to supervise it himself. His class was the only one on the playground. With his shout of "OK, that's it!" recess ended and pupils returned to class.

Wednesday is library day for George's class. The media specialist takes charge of the class for a brief lesson on library use and a time for book selection. Library period is 2:30 to 3:00 p.m. Settled in the classroom again at 2:20, only 10 minutes remained for a quick review of some of the steps the pupils had identified in their analysis of the sequence of events in the ThinkAbout program. George listed the events on the overhead projector as pupils suggested them, guiding the discussion with comments like "No, something happened before that" if he felt someone had skipped a step.

The emphasis was entirely on "What happened next?" the lesson

George made of the program, rather than on the reliability of information sources, the lesson proposed in the teacher's guide. During the discussion the teacher had the class examine how there were really two sequences of events, one leading to each of the two different headlines, and how reporter Sue needed to understand what people thought was happening as well as what was actually happening. As he noted in a hasty summary just prior to dismissing the class for the library, "That made the sequencing a little confused."

It was each teacher's responsibility to get the class to and from the library. George led the class down the corridor, stepped into the library until the class had settled down, then headed to the staff room for a cup of tea. He returned to his classroom but kept an eye on the clock so that he would not be late returning for the class promptly at 3:00. At his direction the class returned to begin a new activity, social studies. ("So-so studies," a bright pupil mumbled for my benefit.) Today the class viewed a filmstrip describing the exploits of one of the Spanish explorers in Central America. From a pupil perspective the point of the lesson seemed to be to get called on to read one of the captions.

At 3:25 George terminated the filmstrip lesson, reviewed names of pupils with homework assignments, distributed one handout, reminded everyone to "put up your chairs" (to make it easier for the custodian to clean) and dismissed pupils at the door. Students did not linger, though many said a ritual goodby as they exited and a few directed their goodby specifically to the teacher: "Goodby, Mr. Walker. See you tomorrow." Within about a minute the classroom was

empty except for two boys who had to stay after school because they had accumulated "too many marks" against them during the afternoon.

(On one afternoon George was showing a film that had not quite ended when it was time for dismissal. He kept the film running after the 3:30 bell and invited pupils to watch it if they wished. Although the film--about grizzly bears--seemed to get good attention during regular class time, and although it ran a mere 120 seconds beyond the end of the official school day, only two boys remained to watch it.)

Repeat Performance

I was visiting George's class when the same ThinkAbout program was repeated on a Monday afternoon a week and a half later. By this time the ThinkAbout sequence had become hopelessly garbled. Five days earlier George had prepared the class for the expected program by having them write out directions for how to tie your shoe, a suggested activity for Program 46. However, that particular program was not broadcast that week, so as the television set was warming up on this day he said, "The assignment I gave you last time about tying your shoes was for the wrong ThinkAbout program. Maybe today that is the program we will see." George was scanning his teacher's guide as the program began. From the curiously enthusiastic response of the pupils he knew that it was not the program he expected and that it was a repeat; he soon realized it was the program about the Martians. "Oh, let's not watch it," he said in a somewhat teasing manner. The pupils groaned their disagreement, and he changed his tone: "Would you like to see it again?" The class cheered, and George commented, "All right! Don't say I never did anything for you."

Attention was as rapt as on the first viewing, for this program was lively, action-packed, filled with imagination and humor. There was quite a bit of laughter. The classroom mood was light. Instead of jumping to his feet to turn off the set and take charge when ThinkAbout came to a close, George left the set on. The next program was The Letter People. He asked the class if they wanted to continue watching, and got an affirmative response. But the pupils were soon laughing at a silly story in which Mr. "Y" was explaining how he could become the "happiest person in Letterland," and after four minutes George turned the set off, accompanied by only a ritual burst of dismay.

George asked the pupils whether they learned any more by watching the repeat broadcast of ThinkAbout or whether they learned it all the first time. One boy who always had a comment to make about everything volunteered that he had not realized the girl in the story wore braces the first time he viewed the program. The teacher responded in similar fashion: "Well, that's important. Anything else?" There were no other comments. "I guess you learned it all the first time," he concluded.

And now what? Ten minutes to go before recess; no new ThinkAbout material to discuss. "I'll have to give you something else," George announced, "but it will have to be a bit more instructional." I guess he was still in a teasing mood, for he filled the next few minutes with one of his popular short "filler" activities, having the children guess artist and title for his personal collection of old "45 LP" records. (George referred to this lightly as "music appreciation.") At 2:02 he took the class out for recess.

The pupils returned from recess to their own classroom for their regular Monday afternoon session with the school counselor. On this day her lesson was to show and discuss the film The Shopping Bag Lady. (For our media focus here, I might note that although the picture was large and in color, the counselor had trouble with both sound and frame while showing the film. The sound was so bad that she had to stop the film to ask whether everyone was able to understand it. Before showing the film she also asked if anyone had seen it before; 10 of the 22 children present had already seen it, but she proceeded with the lesson as planned, pausing only to add, "And if you've seen it before, see what else you can learn.")

George returned to the classroom at 3:01, and the counselor promptly departed from her last session of the afternoon. The final period of the day was devoted to social studies, students taking turns reading orally from a text about Latin America until it was time to prepare for the 3:30 dismissal.

During the afternoon visit I wrote in my notes:

> George's style seems to be to keep things moving. He's always got something he can pull out to fill time, nothing ever takes too long, and there is not a lot of follow-up. Also, his own mood--or his reading of the mood of the class--seems to be a big influence on the activities he chooses.

There had been a number of examples that very day of how his mood affected the choice of activities. The day had gotten off to a slow start, with 70 minutes allotted to another rehearsal of the forthcoming dance program that involved six classrooms. Reading was, rather predictably, on schedule. The third period of the morning has been devoted to rewriting "on good paper" an assignment that had been drafted earlier. After lunch George was about to begin his daily

story reading, but he sensed that the pupils would not really be receptive to his reading that day. Instead, he put them to work on an assignment doing individual worksheets that required them to pair off and record a number of measurements (in centimeters) of themselves, made with the help of their partners. That activity had continued until ThinkAbout time. It had gone slowly but well and had ended in a light note as some (carefully chosen) measurements were shared. Although he intended to make no instructional use of it, he allowed the class to watch a repeat ThinkAbout broadcast (conceivably he might have returned to the intended lesson on information sources, but I imagine he felt he was actually "through" with the program.) In the same mood he let the class watch a few more minutes of The Letter People (on another day, in another mood, they watched a soap opera when ThinkAbout repeated), and then let them play the music game.
I emphasize mood rather than moodiness or brooding; I think the pupils did not find George at all bewildering and they seemed quite used to a style in which they did not always know exactly what was coming next. There was a certain spontaneity about the class, a sense of give-and-take. But these elements were much more apparent in the (long) afternoon, after the more serious and structured part of the day was past.

ThinkAbout was subjected to that same "mood." The class watched most, but not all, of the programs during the year. (And as far as either of us or the district's media specialist could determine, George's class was the only class that watched it of the 100 elementary classrooms in the district.) Sometimes programs were discussed; sometimes not. Sometimes the lesson taught was the lesson suggested in the guide; sometimes

the follow-up activity had little or nothing to do with the program itself.

Why ThinkAbout?

I think the basic problem George was trying to solve was how to make constructive use of the long afternoon period when his daily supply of ideas and energy ran low. He himself noted how differently he perceived his morning and afternoon programs:

> Basically the morning subjects are language arts and math. I guess because I've done them every year and they kind of stay the same, I feel more confident or competent in teaching those subjects. I think I'm more prepared and have more to fall back on. So we do those in the morning, and everything pretty much goes as planned. As long as I've got things planned, classes go pretty well. And in the morning, we do a lot of work in writing, math problems, and meeting in small groups.
>
> In the afternoon it kind of shifts when we're in the science or social studies areas. This year we've spent most of the time as a large group. And I just don't feel as good teaching those subjects as I do the others. For one thing, the social studies textbook is new.
>
> If ThinkAbout came in the morning, I probably wouldn't use it. There's just so much under language arts and math that you have to cover--passing district objectives, all the things you want to cover that the kids will be tested on--that you don't want to give up the morning as much as you would in the afternoon.
>
> It's a lot easier to give and take in the afternoon. If kids miss a lesson in social studies or science, it's not going to hurt them at all. Whereas if they don't get their math one day, I almost always have to be sure they get it later.
>
> ThinkAbout does also come on in the morning here. We did take one morning to watch it because I thought the program was worthwhile [Program 26, "Cultural Patterns," which most of the class missed during the afternoon of a Christmas program], but we wouldn't watch it regularly if that was the only time the program came.

He reflected further upon his use of ThinkAbout during the first year:

> I don't think of ThinkAbout as a specific skill or something that's listed under our objectives. I think

> there's room for things like this, but you have to really pick and choose.
>
> At this point I just think of ThinkAbout as a good resource. I haven't looked that much up or planned that much around the programs. If the program has pertained to what we are doing, then we go with it from there. If it doesn't, then we just watch it and enjoy it and talk about it a little if we want to.

Pupil Reactions

I never felt successful with my efforts to elicit "spontaneous reactions" to ThinkAbout from pupils in George's class. They knew that my interests were related to the program and could not help making the further assumption that I was somehow responsible for its production. If that made their candid assessments about the series difficult to obtain, I should note that it proved to be an otherwise totally satisfactory explanation of my presence in their classroom. I heard one pupil explain my presence to a boy in another class, "That's Harry. The ThinkAbout guy. Doing research." The more outgoing students approached me easily, asked for my help, brought me up to date on any recent events, and scanned my notes thoroughly. But my efforts to get them to analyze ThinkAbout never got beyond their individual review of the programs they "remembered," their "remembering" standing as an implicit measure of the programs deemed to be "best." In a general discussion at the conclusion of the entire series, the class gave ThinkAbout a global rating of "about 8" (on a scale I assumed to be from 1 to 10). At that time five of 18 students present said they felt the program was best suited for sixth graders; the other 13 felt it was most suitable for grade 5. But their teacher plans to use it again with the sixth grade; he felt that the program was pitched just right for that grade level.

The teacher had class members do two written assignments for me during the spring. In one assignment the children placed themselves in one of the ThinkAbout plots and retold the story from that perspective--sans lesson or moral. In the other I asked pupils to compare home viewing and school viewing. Excerpts from three papers provide some flavor of their responses:

> (Sixth-grade girl): When I am at school I watch television with the class and Mr. Walker and Mr. Wolcott. On the rug I sit by Donna, Barbara, Alice, Tina, and Joanne. At home I watch television with my sister and my dad.
>
> At school I watch television about 1:30. When I watch television at home I watch it at 4:30 and then between 8:00-10:00.
>
> At school I watch television on the rug. At home I watch television in my room. We have two television sets, one in my room and one in the living room. My sister and I were in the same room and then my dad made a new room and I moved into the room. My sister got the stereo and I got the television.
>
> I watch ThinkAbout at school. I watch mostly comedies and movies at home. At school I watch television to learn. At home for something to do.
>
> (Sixth-grade boy): At home I watch television with my mother, my father, my sister, and my brother. At school I watch it with Mr. Walker, Harry, and my class.
>
> At home on school nights I watch television from 3:30 to 10:00. On weekends as long as I want. At school I watch television at 1:30.
>
> At home I watch television in the living room. We have another one in my mom and dad's room but I never use it. At school I watch television at my desk.
>
> At home I watch mostly comedy. At school I watch ThinkAbout.
>
> At home on school nights I watch television about 7½ hours, on weekends about 10 hours. At school 15 minutes.

At home some of my favorites are One in a Million, Star Trek, Happy Days, Laverne and Shirley, and Fantasy Island. At school there's only one show so I don't have a favorite.

At home I watch television because I like to and there's nothing else to do. At school I watch television because we have to.

In the fifth grade we watched a history show and a book show called "Cover to Cover."

(Sixth-grade boy): At home I watch television with my mom and dad. At school I watch television with Steve and Tom. Well, the whole class watches.

At home I watch television in the family room and on Saturday morn in my room. At school on the rug.

At home I watch after school and after dinner and Saturday in the morn and at night and on Sunday at night. At school I watch television at 1:30 Mon. and Wed.

At home I watch Flintstones, Happy Days, Brady Bunch, Mork and Mindy, Eight is Enough, Hulk, Dukes of Hazzard, Hogan's Heroes, Charley's Angels, and cartunes. At school I watch ThinkAbout.

At home on weekdays I watch about 5 hours, on weekends 4 hours. At school 15 min.

I watch television at home when I don't have nothing better to do. At school to learn.

Conserving Energy

Too quickly we may all forget a sense of panic the nation felt during 1979-1980 as fuel costs soared and fuel shortages loomed. (Since visits to Washington School involved a 50-mile round trip drive for me, I began my observations there as soon as I learned that a teacher was using ThinkAbout. I felt I should get my traveling in as soon as possible on the chance that later in the school year such long drives might become inordinately costly or even impossible.) Thermostats across the country were turned down,

tax breaks were given for improved home insulation, and the nation became energy-conscious. The new realization was that each individual's efforts at conservation would (or at least might) make a difference. For the skeptical, rising costs that saw gasoline go from about $.99 to $1.25 helped bring the point home. Everyone started re-examining ways to save fuel/money. Even school boards.

In early spring 1980, the local school board joined the national effort by attempting to economize on the district's huge transportation outlay. Included in that reorganization was the incredible idea of having school close at the same time each day for all elementary school children throughout the district, thus eliminating the doubling back that brought busses to its 11 elementary schools at 2:30 each afternoon for the primary children and required them to return one hour later for the pupils in the intermediate grades. I describe the decision as incredible because on other grounds (lack of preparation time for intermediate-grade teachers, too long a day for pupils and teachers alike) the board had steadfastly refused for years to consider a shortened day and when, several years before, they had finally acceded to having intermediate-grade pupils dismissed early on one afternoon a week--a Thursday afternoon early dismissal still in effect--they had done it begrudgingly, almost punitively. And now, for reasons entirely unrelated to pupil or teacher welfare, the decision was accomplished in a moment and effective immediately.

The decision resulted in the saving of teacher energy as well. With a 2:30 dismissal, George Walker's class no longer needed a 15-minute afternoon recess, but nonetheless his instructional time was

reduced 45 minutes a day, almost four hours a week. I do not think it is a coincidence that after the "big bus schedule change," George found that he was no longer a regular viewer of ThinkAbout. I rather wonder whether he would have watched the last programs in the series at all had I not contacted him in April to ask if I might return once more to "see how the class was doing."

The bus schedule change provided about the nearest equivalent an observer has to a "natural experiment." Although the fact that George's ThinkAbout viewing came to a virtual standstill when the afternoon schedule was shortened does not prove my hypothesis--that George experienced a resource shortage of his own during the long afternoons (a hypothesis supported in part by George's own perception of the "afternoon program")--it does not detract from that hypothesis either. The school district's efforts to save energy inadvertently (and quite unintentionally) reduced a drain on teacher energy as well. That savings in energy may have resulted in less dependence on an outside resource like ThinkAbout. With the shorter day, George had less worry about how to fill up the day, more concern for covering those topics that needed to be covered and, when possible, still taking time to have the class enjoy and appreciate their days at school.

In Conclusion

I concluded my report of a year's observations of ThinkAbout with the case study of George Walker's sixth grade class because in my opinion George is an example of a teacher who is open to the possibilities of instructional television and who is, I believe, consciously

looking for "help" (in the public sense of assistance, but in the personal sense of direction as well) with his teaching.

As George candidly admitted, ThinkAbout gave him "15 minutes twice a week that I didn't have to plan or teach." In that regard it was an energy saver and a welcome one. George felt no misgivings if the children enjoyed the program or found it entertaining. He did not insist that everything he did in class had to be "good" for his pupils.

And yet he felt that ThinkAbout was good for them. It was a source of specific ideas (brainstorming, giving reports, getting information, becoming conscious of patterns, remembering, analyzing issues), it addressed the broad concern for problem solving (which "tied in nicely with a unit on the scientific method" that he followed briefly but was of general interest throughout the year), and it addressed problems related to science and social studies, two curricular areas in which George felt somewhat inadequate and under-prepared.

George is part of the ThinkAbout audience; my assessment is that far more attention might be paid to the teachers like him in that audience. The program helped him. It could have helped him even more if--either in the program itself or in a supportive network of other users--he had found ideas for his teaching, including how to use the ThinkAbout program itself. He explicitly stated how valuable it would have been for him to hear how other teachers were using the program. But he was the only teacher in his entire district using the series. On the only day in the year when the opportunity arose to attend a ThinkAbout workshop, George was just saying goodby

to his pupils in a classroom some 35 miles away at the moment when the meeting was being convened. *Face-to-face meetings do not seem* to be the answer.

George says he plans to use ThinkAbout again next year. At his school, that will probably mean viewing the programs on open broadcast again, since video equipment in the district is in short supply. He feels that his familiarity with the program this past year will make it "more valuable" next year: "It's just like knowing a social studies book. You can pick and choose and you know where you are going with it. It will be much easier to tie in with what we are doing. And I don't think it will be at all dated!"

ThinkAbout in year one helped George solve some resource problems. A new schedule has provided at least a partial solution to the energy problem. If he uses ThinkAbout in year two it will be for the help he seeks in curricular areas. He is the ultimate judge. Even now, only a month after the close of school, the question of whether the pupils liked the series is only academic. Next September they will all be in junior high school; only George remained behind in the sixth grade. If ThinkAbout turned him on last year, he will probably turn ThinkAbout on in the year ahead.

Together... serving education.

Printed in U.S.A.